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**SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG WOMEN IN ADULT LITERACY CLASSROOMS:
THE CASE OF THE MOTHER CHILD EDUCATION FOUNDATION (AÇEV) IN
TURKEY**

A Dissertation in

Adult Education & Comparative and International Education

by

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Abstract

Prior research indicates that social support is strongly related to socioeconomic, physical, and mental well-being. Building on this work, this qualitative research study employed ethnographic tools to examine the perceptions of social support among women in adult literacy classrooms, specifically those provided by *Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı* (AÇEV; Mother Child Education Foundation) in Istanbul, Turkey. Paying special attention to characteristics of AÇEV and partnering institutions, AÇEV's idiosyncratic approach to adult literacy, and the social, economic and historical context in which adult literacy education is provisioned in Turkey, the research examined the relationship between the underlying approach to adult literacy, curricular materials, their implementation in the classroom, and perceptions of social support by women learners. The data sources included interviews with professional AÇEV staff, volunteer teachers and women learners, classroom observations, AÇEV's curricular materials, a social support survey, and photographs taken at the sites. The data were analyzed using thematic and discourse analyses. Global norm making was used as a lens to understand how AÇEV came to interpret and implement functional literacy in a peculiar way, one that heavily emphasized women's support. Over time, functional literacy was transformed to become more oriented toward fostering social support, and the curricular materials explicitly, consistently, and repeatedly attempted to create a supportive environment for the women learners. Deconstructing normative gender roles and expectations and helping women become aware of and actively advocate for their rights were salient goals of the program. Women learners reported offering emotional and informational support to each other, and their perceptions were supported by classroom observations. Material and tangible support were rare among the women and mostly flowed from AÇEV to the participants in the form of various educational materials. The findings of this

research suggest that adult literacy classrooms can be a venue where women learners perceive and receive various forms of support from their peers, teachers, and other actors they meet while attending the programs.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Social support has been found to be strongly associated with the well-being of families and individuals, especially in helping them manage and cope with stress and mental health problems (Letvak, 2002), deal with food insecurity (Swanson, Olson, Miller, & Lawrence, 2008), find and maintain jobs (Berry, Katras, Sano, Lee, & Bauer, 2007), and have better physical health in general (Berkman, 1984; House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988). Social support also has an influence on the overall well-being of individuals (Berkman, 1984; Coker et al., 2002) as it tends to buffer psychological stress (Greenblatt, Becerra, & Serafetinides, 1982) and have a beneficial effect notwithstanding how stressed people are (Cohen & Willis, 1985).

Similar studies in Turkey found that living with extended family and having access to family support helped early postpartum emotional adaptation (Kuscu, Akman, et al., 2008) and enabled breastfeeding (Goksen, 2002), while antenatal depression was linked to lower emotional support from family (Senturk, Abas, Berksun, & Stewart, 2011). The size of one's perceived social support correlated with general health and perceptions of one's quality of life (Altiparmak, Temel, Taner, Altiparmak, & Yildirim, 2012; Arkar, Sari, & Fidaner, 2004). Perceptions of social support, as measured by surveys, correlated negatively with postpartum depression (Ege, Timur, Zincir, Geckil, & Sunar-Reeder, 2008; Yagmur & Ulukoca, 2010) and positively with health-related quality of life in cancer patients (Filazoglu & Griva, 2008; Kuscu, Dural, et al., 2009) and women going through infertility treatments (Yagmur & Oltuluoglu, 2011).

Literacy programs often serve disadvantaged groups who may lack social support and large social networks, which may also have to deal with an assortment of issues correlating with poverty. People in poverty tend to have social networks that are often limited, particularly if they

live in areas of concentrated disadvantage. They are more likely to live in communities lacking basic components of social support, such as good schools and other key institutions, and where levels of participation in a variety of activities, including educational and political activities, may be low (Fullick, 2009). Starting in the 1950s, rapid industrialization and waves of internal immigration from the rural Anatolia to metropolitan areas such as Istanbul (Belge & Blaydes, 2014) added millions of poor subsistence farmers in Turkey to the still increasing population of the major cities, often to the detriment of their local and family support networks. Poverty, which had been largely rural and out of sight, became visible in cities, and neo-liberal economic policies, combined with an ineffective and unwilling centralized state in terms of providing social welfare, have emphasized the role of the non-government sector in tackling the issues surrounding the lives of the new urban poor. These immigrants are disconnected from familial social support networks, which have traditionally been crucial especially in times of crisis (Ozturk, 2011). The urban poor, in return, had adopted aggressive survival strategies by becoming part of social networks on religious, ethnic, and cultural bases for solidarity. There is evidence, however, that some of those networks and related means of acquiring wealth have started to dissolve in Istanbul; homeownership via building on government land illegally, and eventually renting to the newcomers cycle is now broken in boroughs such as Sultanbeyli (Pinarcioglu & Isik, 2008).

These days, investors connected to the central and local political elites purchase tracts of land, develop housing and retail spaces, and market them in an aggressive fashion to the nascent rich. More recently, large urban transformation projects in Istanbul have pushed the inhabitants of the now valuable and profitable lands into mass-produced housing in the more remote peripheries of the city. This will likely lead to “increased displacement and dispossession of the

urban poor and heightened levels of spatial and socioeconomic segregation” (Kuyucu & Unsal, 2010, p. 1482). It also hints at a more permanent poverty for the people at the bottom of the hierarchy, the newly arrived immigrants who may not be able to amass wealth in the ways that earlier waves of immigrants were able to by way of “squatter housing market and the urban rents generated therein” (Pinarcioglu & Isik, 2008, p. 1355). To be clear, this route to social mobility was never available to every immigrant, and various networks of power and influence played a role in the way these lands were divvied up in emerging *gecekondu* (built overnight) communities. However, the numbers of such immigrants living in informal communities were such that local and central politicians saw catering to their needs as an election investment. There is now a fundamental shift where a “populist regime is superseded by a neo-liberal one, which no longer tolerates informal markets and populist strategies of rent (re)distribution” (Kuyucu & Unsal, 2010, p. 1483).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) guided structural adjustment programs, preparations for integration with the European Union, the emergence of new actors in the welfare field (e.g., the World Bank), and the neoliberal politics of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) have contributed to the recent transformation of the Turkish welfare systems (Yazici, 2012). Despite drastic expansion of means-tested social assistance and free health care programs for the poor, which has sharply increased the number of beneficiaries and the share of government budgets allocated since the election of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) in 2002 (Yoruk, 2012), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicators show that public social expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (11.1%) was well below the OECD average (21.1%) in 2011 (OECD, 2015). Moreover, access to patronage and state power are determining factors in one’s likelihood of being a

beneficiary of social policy in Turkey (Morvaridi, 2013). In fact, claims of clientelism have risen to such an extent that there has been a backlash in the Turkish society, particularly among those critical of the ruling party, toward the emerging social safety programs. The new welfare programs are perceived as a crucial catalyst in AKP's continued success in local and national elections. Lastly, state-supported social safety operates in its simplest form as a social insurance system that only protects those who are or have been in employment in the formal sector (Morvaridi, 2013). As such, those working in the informal sector, including women, have to rely on other forms of social protection.

For low-income women living in informal neighborhoods and working informal sector jobs without access to social insurance, cultivating a rich network of social relations that can be deployed when needed can be more successful than investments in economic or human capital, since women are routinely excluded from participating in the formal economy (Belge & Blayde, 2014). Participating in adult education programs is often conceptualized as investing in human capital (Baptiste, 2001); however Belge and Blayde's (2014) suggestion disregards some of the unexpected gains (Prins, 2006) in terms of access to new social support networks associated with adult literacy education, which this research study aims to explore. To put it another way, based on the data in this study, I argue that attending an adult literacy course can become a way of cultivating a rich network of social relations, at least for some of the participating women in Istanbul.

AÇEV is a non-governmental organization (NGO) headquartered in Istanbul with more than two decades of experience in adult literacy education, and they are well-connected to academic institutions, government agencies, national and international NGOs, and private funders. Although, they have published research on the literacy programs that they offer through

collaborations with academics across the globe, I was not able to find any research on the intersection of adult literacy program participation and various forms of social support. A few years before embarking on the research project, I reached out to them and inquired if the NGO had done any internal research on the issue. I was told that not only there was no such prior research, they would be interested in exploring this topic. Hence, this dissertation research project was born.

Based on in-depth interviews with the adult literacy program administrators and designers at AÇEV main offices, I found that they consider such a potential relationship as an unexpected outcome that is secondary to their program goals focused on increased print literacy skills, which is in line with “functional literacy,” the guiding theoretical framework for their adult literacy programs. However, this ethnographic inquiry suggests that AÇEV’s adult literacy programs provide a fruitful venue to study the junction of program participation and social support as well as the role that institutions and educational researchers play in recreating and re-appropriating educational theory.

Problem Statement

There is evidence demonstrating that adult literacy classrooms may become spaces offering various forms of social support (Merrill, 2006; Prins, 2006; 2010; Prins, Toso, & Schafft, 2009; Ramdeholl, 2010). Prins’s (2006, 2010) ethnographic study in El Salvador at two different villages explored how participating men and women benefited psychosocially from a Freire-inspired literacy program in ways that were not specified by the goals of the curriculum as an unpredictable consequence of literacy. Her research is especially relevant to mine in several ways. She frames literacy as a social practice embedded in particular cultural, historical, political, and social contexts highlighting the relationship between literacy and issues of power

and identity. The so-called New Literacy Studies (NLS) theoretical perspective will be shedding light to my research in Turkey as well (Bartlett, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009; Collins & Blot, 2003; Gee, 1999, 2008; Street, 2003). Secondly, the gender relationships Prins reports are similar to those I observed in Turkey, especially in terms of societal norms that limit the women's mobility and discourage men and women socializing together (see Gungor & Prins, 2010 for a discussion of how these norms exhibit themselves in Turkish curricular materials). Based on observations and interviews in Turkey, I agree with Prins (2006) that "isolation and restricted mobility are features of poor women's lives which appear to cut across nationality, race, culture, and geography" (p. 20).

A major weakness with the research from Turkey on social support (Altıparmak et al., 2012; Arkar, Sari, & Fidaner, 2004; Ege et al., 2008; Filazoglu & Griva, 2008; Goksen, 2002; Senturk, Abas, Berksun, & Stewart, 2011; Yagmur & Oltuluoglu, 2011; Yagmur & Ulukoca, 2010) is the overdependence on survey instruments in measuring social support, which creates an opening for the current study to offer a more complete picture of the phenomenon of perceived social support in the Turkish context. Brief survey measures of social support are useful in collecting data in a short amount of time; however, they are not very good at comprehensively describing the social support perceived or the support network through which the support is enacted. They do not produce much information about the nature and extent of people's social integration or what social support means to them (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010). As such, this study will address two related issues on social support: Exploring the implications of taking part in a literacy course on the perceived social support available to participants, and more elaborately describing what social support means to participants in a literacy course than can be provided by studies that solely rely on survey instruments.

Purposes of Research

The purposes of this ethnographic inquiry are twofold. First, it aims to explore the perceived social support among participants in an adult literacy course at Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV, as they have asked me to refer to them in print) in Istanbul, and examine any possible role that AÇEV, their idiosyncratic approach to adult literacy program design and implementation, and the national literacy framework in Turkey may play in the participants' reports. It is necessary to clarify some concepts used in the articulation of the first research goal above. The term *national literacy framework* refers to the characteristics of the adult literacy provision system under the control of Ministry of National Education (MONE) in Turkey. Although AÇEV is the providing institution, MONE is ultimately responsible for adult literacy education in Turkey, and AÇEV provides their services under the legal and policy framework set by MONE. Based on my experiences with MONE and literacy education in Turkey (Gungor, 2006) and findings of the current research project, I argue that the strong focus on testing, especially in programs geared towards basic education diplomas, influence how participating adults connect with each other.

The second purpose is to study the history of AÇEV as an NGO and its evolving role in adult literacy education in Turkey. Studying the history of AÇEV, the origins of AÇEV's theoretical approaches to literacy, and any relationship these approaches may have with the scientific linkages between Turkey, North America, and Western Europe may provide context for descriptions and analysis of social support and adult literacy programs. I also intend to build on recent theory development (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014) to explain how educational ideas (e.g., functional literacy) move and are transformed across time and space in the process.

On its surface, this purpose does not seem directly related to perceived social support in the literacy classroom; however, the findings indicated that AÇEV's unique way of describing "functional literacy" shapes how participating women interact and form relationships in the classroom. Although AÇEV still uses the label "functional literacy" when describing their programs, the heavy emphasis on women's issues in the curriculum (e.g., reproductive health, various forms of violence and discrimination against women, family law) brings aspects of Freirean and New Literacy Studies perspectives in their classrooms. Ironically, this is especially the case in the Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP), highlighting how AÇEV has transformed what functional literacy means by responding to the social, political, and economic changes in the population that they are serving. This represents a sea change within Turkey in how women's issues are discussed. Through in-depth interview data with AÇEV staff who have been with the NGO almost from the beginning of their work in adult literacy, this research will elucidate the historicity of a dynamic institution that has been an influential actor in adult literacy in Turkey and in countries and regions with a historical connection to Turkey in the last two decades.

Research Questions

The research process, from literature review to data collection and analysis, was guided by the following research questions.

1. How do participants in AÇEV adult literacy programs perceive social support within the programs?
2. How do instructional activities in the classroom and AÇEV's approach toward literacy shape networking opportunities for participants and the availability of social support?

3. How does the national literacy framework (e.g., rules and regulations on credentialing students' literacy) shape the way students are connected to each other and social support available in AÇEV programs?

The study participants are women living in informal neighborhoods in the periphery of the city and in poorer segments of the older, more established neighborhoods closer to the city center that are targets for state-supported urban transformation projects. They are participants in four adult literacy program sites offered by AÇEV, and the results of the analysis indicate that participating in the program—at least for some of the women—leads to perceptions of available social support from teachers and peers if needed. More importantly, AÇEV professional staff (particularly members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department team in Mecidiyekoy), field advisers, and volunteer teachers were also included in the study, and they provide various forms of social support to participating women on a wide variety of problems such as domestic violence, social exclusion, and discrimination. The curricular materials for the Functional Adult Literacy Program offer action-facilitating informational support, and the classroom activities encourage women to share their personal lives, which often creates an atmosphere where emotional support is perceived by participating women. The classroom can also be a space for possible tensions and disagreements; however the curriculum and its implementation in the field deal with tensions deliberately rather than assuming all social interactions are supportive.

Research Design

The research was based in the ethnographic research tradition (Fetterman, 2010; Wolcott 1980, 1987, 1999, 2005) utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data. The data sources for the study included recorded and transcribed interviews with professional AÇEV staff (four present and former members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department in the main offices and

four field advisers), four volunteer teachers, 16 women participating in AÇEV programs, and three academics. The study was conducted at four adult literacy program sites implementing two different curricula provided by AÇEV in Istanbul, Turkey. I interviewed four of the 31 participants twice to clarify and build on initial interviews, and I kept in touch with professional AÇEV staff, academics, and two of the four volunteer teachers via e-mail, video conferencing, and telephone calls. The interview data were complemented by field notes, still photographs, a social support survey, and curricular materials.

The bulk of the data was collected in five weeks in Istanbul in spring 2014. Furthermore, I was able to conduct participant observation at a Library of Congress event where AÇEV was presented a prestigious literacy award by the Center for the Book in Washington, DC in fall 2014. Data analysis and writing of the results involved staying in touch with AÇEV staff and voluntary teachers to ensure that there were no mistakes in the observation reports, and the results and conclusions drawn were congruent with the experiences and observations of AÇEV affiliated academics, staff, and teachers. As a result, like many research endeavors with an ethnographic perspective, the research process is still ongoing to some extent at the time of writing the dissertation; I am still in touch with the staff and volunteer teachers and have been sharing my analysis and conclusions to get their feedback and to increase the trustworthiness of the research. In fact, this process has been so fruitful and rewarding that I have plans to spend the summer of 2016 in Istanbul exploring other possible research collaborations with AÇEV. According to all the feedback that I received from them, they found the implications of this research process useful for the programs and their efforts of redefining and revising the programs in the rapidly changing social, economic, and political context of Turkey.

Significance, Contributions, and Limitations of the Study

Social support and these dynamic and changing networks through which support is perceived and enacted need to be better understood in the context of educational programs targeting the urban poor, since these programs are often touted as a cure-all for social and economic struggles by politicians and policy makers. However, Pinarcioglu and Isik (2007) observed that for new immigrants to Sultanbeyli, economic capital has been historically accrued by virtue of being part of a network of traditional relations rather than formal educational credentials. There was also another counterintuitive finding related to gender: The higher a family reached in the social ladder of this religiously conservative community, the more likely it was for women to be discouraged from labor participation, “and the more likely it was to be proud for this practice where virginity, honour, obedience and motherhood were the real virtues” (p. 1363). This finding also implies that households falling within the more permanent poor are forced to consider women’s economic participation, which requires print literacy practices in a complex and increasingly hard to navigate city that is larger than some European countries, with 14 million people spanning two continents. Furthermore, as the results of my research indicate, there are new forms of print literacy practice emerging among the urban poor women, which now include being able to use mobile devices connected to the Internet for a wide range of reasons (e.g., social media, using e-government web applications, etc.). As such, this research provides valuable insight into how an adult literacy program has studied and responded to these changing practices along with the implications of adult literacy education program participation for the way social support is perceived and enacted through networks formed inside and outside of program activities.

Although adult literacy programs have historically been offered by both NGOs and Ministry of National Education (MONE) in Turkey, there is no prior research on the implications of taking part in a literacy course on the perceived social support available to participants, who are primarily women since adult literacy programs are very heavily gendered in both sectors. This study aims to fill that gap with the assumption that knowing more about such outcomes may help teachers and administrators of those programs, as well as policy makers, design programs more conducive to fostering social support among participants, replacing or complementing more traditional sources and forms of social support. An informed reformulation of policy, or at the very least a better understanding of the opportunities that literacy programs may offer in social support to participating adults, is necessary based on the positive role social support seems to have on people's lives.

The results of this study are significant in terms of exploring the previously unexamined intersection between the adult literacy classroom and social support perceived and enacted inside and outside the class in Turkey. Furthermore, through special attention to the research process itself, I hope to illustrate how fieldwork can be done in a short amount of time, relative to what has been deemed appropriate historically, utilizing various telecommunication tools and rigorous pre-planning building on the work of Jeffrey and Troman (2004) on different time modes in ethnography. Lastly, this research project also yielded support for Oppenheim and Stambach's (2014) theoretical framework on global norm making as a process to better understand the role of different actors in shaping the movement of educational theories, in this case functional adult literacy, across time and space. I argue that global norm making framework can be immensely helpful in delineating the role institutions play as nexuses of influence and transformation, and as

such, findings presented here have implications for comparative and international research of adult literacy.

Bereday (1964) recommended that comparative educators “should state at the outset of their work what ideology or viewpoint they espouse” (p. 11). I agree with him without reservation and have situated the proposed study squarely in the New Literacy Studies tradition. This theoretical position, however, limits the comparative power of this research in terms of literacy. Brandt and Clinton (2002) argued that overstating the power of local contexts in defining the meaning and forms of literacy and ignoring the potentials of the technology of literacy lead to a methodological bias and conceptual impasses. They recommend paying more attention to the material dimensions of literacy as a way to deal with these limitations. Street (2006) argued that by using two concepts, literacy events and literacy practices, within the framework of an ideological literacy model, it is possible to start doing comparative research and to organize literacy programs and develop curricula in a more socially conscious and explicit way. However, he falls short of offering a systematic way to conduct such comparative research. Collin and Blot (2003) stressed the importance of lifting “the account of local literacies towards a more general, theoretically comparative set of terms whilst not losing the specificity that NLS has brought to the field” (p. xii), yet do not offer much more on the issue.

In view of this limitation, I see this research as a part of what Bereday (1964) called area studies. An extensive literature review of both English and Turkish publications shows that there is not any former research studying adult literacy as a social practice in Turkey. Hence, my findings will provide future comparative researchers with perspectives on how literacy is practiced locally at AÇEV, “culturally specific expressions and perceptions of support” (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010, p. 516), and any possible connections between literacy practices and perceived

social support. That being said, historical analysis of how functional literacy has been transformed in the Turkish adult literacy context vividly illustrates the recreation of educational theory in new contexts, and the role institutions and educational researchers play in this process.

Overview of the Dissertation

The results of the content analysis of the program materials, classroom observations, in-depth interviews with AÇEV staff, volunteer teachers, women learners, and even the name of the department dealing with adult literacy programming, Literacy and Women's Support Department, indicate that helping women better understand their rights (to make tangible changes in their lives) and more effectively navigate the various social welfare systems and institutions in Turkey is among the major goals of the curriculum AÇEV employs to teach *okuma yazma* (reading and writing). As such, social support is much more central to their literacy program than the "functional adult literacy" label would imply. This discrepancy can be explained by how the functional literacy approach has been transformed at AÇEV, which operates as an NGO within a complex lattice of individual and institutional relationships. Lastly, social support exists in AÇEV programs in various forms, although its existence is contingent upon factors some of which are beyond the control of AÇEV.

This dissertation comprises seven chapters. This first chapter introduced the problem statement, research questions, and the significance, contributions, and limitations of the study. It also provided the essential background information on social safety systems in Turkey in relation to the study participants. The following chapter consists of a review of literature on social support and adult literacy. The third chapter describes ethnography, the research tradition that guided the research, and the research design, planning, data collection, and analysis. This chapter also provides the background information on AÇEV and the programs I visited for the study. The

following three chapters report the study findings: the global norm making process that has contributed to the creation of the idiosyncratic way AÇEV defines functional literacy and its connection to social support; analysis of AÇEV curricular materials in relation to social support; and perceived and enacted social support in the programs based on interviews and the fieldwork. The final chapter presents conclusions based on these findings and presents suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I will discuss the relevant literature on social support and adult literacy. First, I will delineate between social support, social networks, and social integration, terms too often blurred together. I will continue by distinguishing between perceived and enacted support and highlight research related to how they associate with quality of life outcomes. Then I will specify the social support framework that I used during fieldwork and data analysis. I conclude the chapter by discussing adult literacy focusing primarily on Functional Literacy, Critical Literacy, and New Literacy Studies.

Social Support

Concepts

There are three related concepts—namely social support, social networks, and social integration—that are often used to explain real or perceived resources shared in communities. Unfortunately, the three terms are often used together in confusing ways due to the relationship between them (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010; House et al., 1988). Finfgeld-Connett (2005) defined social support as a context-specific phenomenon: “an advocative interpersonal process that is centered on the reciprocal exchange of information” (p. 5). In her framework, social support is executed through “an intact social network” (p. 6) that is typically comprised of family, friends, neighbors, and members of one’s religious community. Social integration/isolation, on the other hand, refers to the presence or quantity of social ties or relationships including the frequency of interaction (House et al., 1988). Since the existence and regularity of social interaction takes

precedence over providing or receiving support, it is possible that people who are socially integrated may not be perceiving or receiving much social support.

For the current study, I distinguish social integration and support both conceptually and empirically by focusing on social support through specific questions in the interviews inquiring the quality of the support *perceived* rather than the mere existence of social interaction and contacts. By definition, then, I examine some of the structural characteristics of the social support network in the way they are experienced by people in the network (House et al., 1988). The term “network” is appropriate since it refers to multi-directional nature of social support (Tardy, 1985). Being aware of the multi-directionality of social support has enabled me to see how participating adults may be perceiving both providing and receiving social support in and outside of the literacy class at the same time. Such a clarity of focus is essential as “perceptions of available support, actual help received, seeking support and network characteristics (e.g., size, social integration, and social density) are at best moderately correlated” (Lakey & Cohen, 2000, p. 30) and may be referring to completely different constructs. The primary concern for this research is the availability of perceived support rather than its enactment. However, before leaving for Turkey I had expected to see examples of enactment of social support through interviews and observations, and I did hear and observe this in the field. Still, the analytic focus remained on the perceptions of participants by asking how satisfied they were with the received support (Lett et al., 2009) and by eliciting responses about what kind of meanings they attached to the support enacted during the interviews.

Clearly differentiating between perception and receipt of social support is necessary in clarifying between various concepts of social support and making sense of social support literature. It is also a key distinction for my own research since I explored the perceived rather

than enacted social support among participants to a literacy program. Perceived social support “emphasizes the cognitive appraisal or perception of the availability and adequacy of support, or satisfaction with support” (Lloyd, 1995, p. 43), while enacted support refers to what people do to provide support. Lett et al. (2009) defined perceived social support as the belief that support would be available if needed. In line with Lloyd (1995), they added that an individual’s assessment of their satisfaction with the received support is part of the person’s perceptions of support that is available to them. This is an important addition: Depending on the nature of the relationship between the support provider and the receiver, the received support can be seen under a negative light. Therefore, the fact that support has been received does not stop the person from reflecting on the process or the materials or services received from friends, family and acquaintances.

Based on her analysis of social support literature, Finfgeld-Connett (2005) argued that the characteristics of the members are more important than their relationship status in ensuring positive perceptions of support; an acquaintance whose support does not come with strings attached and who is dependable and trustworthy can provide more support than family members. She listed unconditional positive regard, availability, reliability, and trustworthiness as key characteristics of effective support. The size of the network and the frequency of interactions among members do not contribute to the well-being of individuals if the interactions are perceived to be negative and stressful (Bowling, 1991). Negative interactions and finding the offered support to be inadequate and lacking are among the primary negative aspects of close relationships (Stansfeld, Fuhrer, & Shipley, 1998). These negative aspects have potent consequences. For example, there is evidence that negative interaction, especially with family and close friends, lowers an older person’s general sense of meaning in life (Krause, 2007).

Therefore, inasmuch as the interactions are negative, increasing one's social integration can do more harm than good. As such, I do not conceive the literacy classroom to be *only* a space for increased social support, and I observed in Istanbul that there were tensions and disagreements in the classrooms at times, which was stressful for at least one of the participants (based on the interview data). However, it is also possible that a new acquaintance made at a literacy course can offer more useful social support despite the recentness of the relationship than a family member depending on the characteristics of the newly formed relationship, and many of the students perceived availability of support when needed, especially from the volunteer teacher whom they considered as a role model.

I do not intend to romanticize and overstate such possibilities. Often the social support networks of the urban poor in Turkey are restricted to people who are themselves in need, and the size of the network may become less crucial than the quality (Eroglu, 2010). Then, the connections in the literacy classroom may not serve much of a role in bettering the individual's life if the newly met people are themselves in need. There is evidence that more support does not necessarily translate into better outcomes if this support comes primarily from people who are themselves struggling. For example, homeless women who reported primary support from substance users appeared to be as vulnerable as those without support (Nyamathi, Leake, Keenan, & Gelberg, 2000). That being said, I do not frame social support as a zero-sum game. After all, individuals' support needs may differ significantly, and they may be able to offer certain kinds of support when they are in need themselves in certain other ways. In addition, this study examined *perceived* social support, which by its very definition means that the promise of support does not need to be realized for it to have a positive effect in the general well-being of individuals. One of the participants in the literacy course may be perceiving that he will be

supported by other students and the teacher in the classroom, and may very well be benefiting from that perception although the support may never materialize. There is a Turkish saying, *yağmasan da gürlle*, which approximately means “even if you cannot make it rain, make it thunder.” If the thunder is never followed by rain, the association between the two would eventually wear off, of course, yet there seems to be a period where the promise is almost as good as—if not better than—the delivery in terms of providing the person with a sense of support, and that’s what I believe the maxim refers to.

For example, the fact that the actual support may not emerge does not make perceived social support less valuable for psycho-social well-being of individuals based on studies both in the United States and Turkey (Arkar et al., 2004; Ege, Timur, Zincir, Geçkil, & Sunar-Reeder, 2008; Filazoglu & Griva, 2008; Goksen, 2002; Kuscu et al., 2008, 2009; Martinez & Lau, 2010). Sometimes perceived emotional support has a larger effect on mental health than tangible or practical aspects of support (Letvak, 2002; Oxman, Berkman, Kasl, Freeman, & Barret, 1992; Stansfeld, Fuhrer, & Shipley, 1998), and perceived social support more reliably buffers the adverse effects of life stress on psychological health than does enacted support (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Perceived social support is also associated with issues as diverse as food security for families (Swanson, Olson, Miller, & Lawrence, 2008), protecting against negative effects of partner abuse (Coker et al., 2002), and alleviating postpartum (Yagmur & Ulukoca, 2010) and third-trimester (Senturk, Abas, Berksun, & Stewart, 2011) depression among women in rural and urban Turkey. Yagmur and Oltuluoglu’s (2011) research with women undergoing fertility treatment, a big stressor in a country where women are often expected to get pregnant right away once married, showed a significant relationship between perceived social support and levels of hope as measured by survey instruments. Similarly, Altiparmak et al. (2012) found a significant

relationship between perceptions of support and quality of life measured using surveys in LGBTI individuals in one of the major cities in Turkey, exemplifying the key role that social support plays for marginalized people in Turkey.

Considering the gendered nature of literacy courses, the findings about Turkish women and the relationship between perceived social support and depression are particularly relevant for this research. Support from the husband, mother, and mother-in-law (Senturk, Abas, Berksun, & Stewart, 2011) and help from family members and friends with childcare and household jobs (Yagmur & Ulukoca, 2010) are crucial sources and types of support for women in Turkey. However, the traditional distribution of labor in the house is such that even if women work outside of the home, they are expected to have a “second shift” at home (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). This research explored whether the adult literacy classroom can be a venue where the women learners, who lack support from family and friends, perceive various forms of support from their peers, teachers, and other actors they meet while attending the program.

This study also explored whether an adult literacy course in urban Turkey can offer a space where participants, teachers and staff are connected to each other in ways that would foster social support and help people with problems stemming from structural issues such as access to health care. Yagmur and Oltuluoglu’s (2011) research with women going through infertility treatment is crucial in illustrating that “social support is not a panacea” (Cobb, 1976, p. 310). Yagmur and Oltuluoglu found that level of education, low SES, living in an isolated locale, and limited access to health insurance are more strongly associated with hopelessness than perceptions of social support both measured using survey instruments. However, when women do not have access to key parts of the social safety net (e.g., health insurance), perceived social support seems to be filling the gap.

Krause's (2007) longitudinal research with older adults suggested that perceived emotional social support is significant enough to change the sense of meaning in life for adults. Receiving emotional support from family members and friends is associated with a greater sense of meaning in life than receiving tangible support from significant others for older adults. Krause speculated that receiving tangible support from family members and friends may lead to feelings of dependency that, in turn, may erode an older person's sense of meaning in life. It seems for the elderly, perceiving enough warmth and understanding to meet an individual's supposed needs precedes the actual availability or frequency of contacts (Oxman et al., 1992). I suspect that the role that family plays is distinctly different in Turkey for both older and younger adults. Although the dependence of families on their children for instrumental and material help is turning into an emotional interdependence as the country gets wealthier and social safety net expands (Kagitcibasi, 2002), the importance of familial solidarity networks remains intact for internal immigrants to Istanbul (Erder, 2002). Many of the participants to the literacy courses at AÇEV were recent immigrants from rural Turkey. The family, along with the circle of wider kinship relations, is still the main channel for information, support, and solidarity for this group (Erder, 2002) despite more recent research arguing that some of these familial networks are not always within reach (Ozturk, 2011; Pinarcioglu & Isik, 2008).

Perceptions of support play such a significant role partially because these perceptions are giving meaning to people's other experiences. Lakey and Cassady (1990) reported that college students low in perceived social support interpreted new supportive behaviors more negatively than those who felt well supported. They were also less likely to recall instances of helpful, supportive behavior when prompted. Therefore, although this current study does not primarily focus on enacted social support, it does provide valuable insight on social support in a literacy

course in Istanbul since the perception of social support changes the general outlook of people, and their well-being.

Focusing primarily on perceptions, however, does bring certain possible problems to the study. For example, there is evidence that mood may affect the level of perceived social support as measured by survey instruments (Cohen, Towbes, & Flocco, 1988) and Senturk, Abas, Berksun, and Stewart (2011) recommended paying attention to the temporal relationship between mood state and social support. The ethnographic nature of this research employing multiple data sources helped in dealing with this issue. I used a survey instrument to triangulate interviews and observations, and as a result spent time with same students on multiple occasions to limit the effect of short-term mood changes on reports about available social support. Furthermore, variables like participant mood are an issue in most research utilizing self-report, therefore observations in the field enabled me construct a more complete picture by bringing a perspective that does not exclusively rely on self-report of the research participants.

Theories Explaining Social Support and Positive Outcomes

In the simplest model of the stress-buffering theory, the appearance of stress is thought to lead to deployment of the social support network, which then alleviates anguish (Rivera, Rose, Futterman, Lovett, & Gallagher-Thompson, 1991). The alternative model proposes that social resources have a beneficial effect notwithstanding how stressed people are (Cohen & Willis, 1985). The current study does not aim to ascertain the validity of either of these theories, yet it is necessary to point out that the mechanism through which the positive effects of social support emerge is not very clear. Rather than testing the buffering or direct effect theories, this study explored how social support is construed at a literacy course in an urban setting by different actors including participants, teachers, and AÇEV staff. The results of this study may help future

studies in similar contexts in Turkey to explore how exactly social support is associated with well-being of people—if it is at all—since understanding what precisely the relationships are between social support and outcomes relating well-being of people in specific populations requires refinements in the conceptualization and assessment of theoretical constructs (Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996).

Social Support and Culture

In one of the pioneering review papers, Cobb (1976) limited social support to perceptions of the person based on information available to them about people around them. He defined social support as “information leading the subject to believe that he is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations” (p. 300). Although this categorization is not very relevant for this research beyond the historical significance, it brilliantly illustrates the cultural differences in the way that social support is framed. Cobb (1976) purposefully limited social support to information “for goods and services may foster dependency, while the classes of information listed above do not. In fact, they tend to encourage independent behavior” (p. 301). Without making any generalizations about the American concerns about dependency and provided material goods, it is not hard to argue that Cobb’s approach is shaped by a certain context that emphasizes independence and his role as a doctor of medicine. A similar perspective on material support and dependency can be observed in Krause’s (2007) longitudinal research with older adults and his speculations regarding older adults receiving tangible support and feelings of dependency. It seems that how social support is characterized by study participants and researchers is heavily influenced by the socio-historical context. As such, this ethnographic research making use of qualitative and quantitative measures will help us better understand how social support is interpreted in a Turkish adult literacy

classroom, expanding and modifying earlier conceptualizations including those of Cobb (1976) and Krause (2007).

Social Support and Literacy

I agree with Prins (2006) that “isolation and restricted mobility are features of poor women’s lives which appear to cut across nationality, race, culture, and geography” (p. 20). I do not agree, however, despite the crucial role meaningful interactions play for people, they would “become more human” (p. 6 and 19) through these interactions (see Gungor, 2012 for a critique of appeals to human nature in discussions of literacy). Women in Prins’s (2006) study reported that the literacy classes provided them with the opportunity to be out of the house, to have a good time as well as to learn. She observed that they shared their daily concerns and problems in and out of the classroom, often reflecting on shared experiences. Men in the program also benefited by “building a network of supportive friends who encouraged them to focus on learning and desist from behaviors that harmed many of their friends and neighbors” (p. 19). The “harmful” behaviors they were referring to included drinking and smoking cigarettes and not spending enough time and resources on their families. She acknowledged that better employment opportunities and public health services could have helped men with their addictions, but the classes filled a gap since neither were available to the men. Prins (2006) argued that in gendered ways, both men and women found a space to be able to go against the prevailing gender norms, and their participation contributed to their psychosocial well-being since it allowed them a chance to form relationships enabling meaningful interactions. Prins went back to one of the villages (Prins, 2010) and interviewed 12 participating men and women from the original study. She reports that some of the long-term psychosocial and interpersonal benefits of participating in the program persisted, and for at least some of the learners, moved to the center of their

recollections of taking part in the program. Prins's analysis (2006) of the gendered ways men and women benefit from attending a literacy course has informed my observations since I expected to see, and did observe, differences based on gender in Istanbul as well.

Guiding Concepts for the Current Study

For the purposes of this study, I will use Finfgeld-Connett's (2005) classification of social support based on her analysis of the literature. She distinguished between emotional and instrumental support. Instrumental support includes providing physical goods such as child care supplies, furniture, and food as well as services such as transportation, physical care, and assistance with household tasks. It can come in the form of providing money or shelter. Emotional support consists of comforting gestures that aim to ease ambiguity, worry, and depression. Emotionally supportive exchanges include sharing ideas and experiences, expressing concerns, and offering encouragement. Some of the emotionally supportive exchanges help divert attention away from the problems by pampering the person and creating opportunities to enjoy friends, socialize, and have fun. Depending on the nature of the relationship and the need, emotional support may require physical presence and a willingness to listen, and it often includes offering advice. Besides, I will add informational support (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992) to Finfgeld-Connett's (2005) classification since emotional support fails to acknowledge interactions where sharing advice and information on issues such as access to social services or childrearing are primary. Furthermore, Cutrona and Suhr (1992) made a distinction between action-facilitating support versus nurturant support, which is useful as it acknowledges another layer of complexity in ways of classifying support. While action-facilitating support is intended to assist the stressed individual to solve or eliminate the problem causing distress, nurturant support encompasses efforts to comfort or console, without direct efforts to solve the problem. As such, the interviews

and observations focused on emotional, instrumental and informational support, and these different kinds of support were explored further depending on whether they intend to facilitate action to solve a problem or comfort and console rather than making immediate changes. Both informational and instrumental support are action-facilitating (they help solve a problem), and emotional support is nurturant (it is meant to comfort and console).

Finfgeld-Connett (2005) posited that a social network and a climate conducive to the exchange of social support are essential after the need for support is established by one of the actors. Her emphasis on the climate directed me toward the kinds of opportunities that the literacy classroom offers for exchanges of support, and I made sure to include interview questions that aimed to explore how the institutional characteristics of AÇEV, in the way they structure the programs, affect *perceptions* of participants in terms of emotional and instrumental support available to them. Based on research with childcare centers in NYC, Small (2009) convincingly argued that what and how much people gain from their networks depends fundamentally on the organizations in which those networks are embedded, and AÇEV as an organization was in the center of the analysis in terms of the design and implementation of their adult literacy programs. AÇEV's established connections with state and non-state actors are influential on women learners' perceptions of support and the programs' ability to offer instrumental support to help women solve problems.

Literacy

Literacy is a term that is tossed around in daily life in a wide variety of contexts in both the United States and Turkey. Sometimes, it is used on its own; often it is combined with words and concepts from other domains of life creating combinations such as health literacy, financial literacy, or—my favorite—technological literacy. In fact, I am fascinated by the metaphorical

way the word literacy is used in the English language in trying to understand new ideas and practices in daily life (see Scribner, 1984 for an example of a researcher employing metaphors to explain literacy). In their classic book on metaphorical nature of human thought processes, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explained that “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p. 5). It is telling that literacy is often evoked while talking about new aspects of modern life, including computers and the Internet, since it reveals an assumption: We understand literacy so well that it can help us make sense of other newer and more complicated words and concepts. The Turkish word for literacy, *okuma yazma*, does not share the same etymological background in Latin with the English word, and sounds even simpler and more transparent on the surface. It can be translated as “reading and writing,” and similarly it is often combined with terms from other spheres of life (e.g., *finansal okur yazarlık*).

This seeming simplicity has often made it difficult for me to explain what I have been studying the better part of the last decade to my family and friends. It is hard to explain that something so straightforward and simple would require me to cross the Atlantic to come to the United States to study. My intention is not to repeat the worn-out story of the misunderstood academic. It is, instead, to explain a deep contradiction in the way that literacy is treated and talked about in both the United States and Turkey and to tie it to my personal biography. After all, my own history with various forms of literacy greatly shapes the way I approach literacy, in general, and this research project, specifically. On one hand, it is simply *reading and writing*, the study of which should not require one to travel across the globe and which ceases to be an issue once the child receives the red ribbon tied in a bow in first grade, the universal sign of being able to read and write for Turkish children. On the other hand, it is enormously powerful, especially

when one is deemed illiterate, *okumaz yazmaz* or even worse *cahil* (uneducated, ignorant, unenlightened), which can function “as a potent, and in many ways, debilitating form of symbolic violence” (Bartlett, 2007, p. 59). My mother, among other family members, has dealt with very similar issues to those adults who worried about being able to sign their names at the bank (Prins, 2006) or not having to leave their thumbprints during an election (Bartlett, 2007), and she has had to deal with being called, on occasion, *cahil* even by my father who has five more years of schooling over her. Then, literacy is more than a diploma, or school attainment in general, in its power to designate who can be considered educated or cultured.

It is also gendered in the way that it is made available to people both during childhood and as adults (Rockhill, 1987). When a school house was built in the small village where my mother was living in early 1960s, she was not allowed to attend by my grandfather who argued that she was sorely needed on the family farm and in the house, and he simply could not spare her. He was able to make do somehow when his three sons attended school. Later in life, when she was married to my father and was living in the town center with two toddlers, she had to lie to the volunteers canvassing the neighborhood looking for “illiterates.” She was afraid that she would be made to attend a free literacy course in the local Halk Eđitim Merkezi (People’s Education Center, state-supported adult education institutions that can be found in every town in the country) during a literacy campaign. The campaigns have often been mobilized in Turkey as a way to increase literacy levels since Arabic scripts were replaced with the Latin alphabet in 1928 (Colak 2004; Sayilan & Yildiz, 2009). She had two children to look after, and as a young woman, it was not acceptable for her to be in a public space on her own, even if that space was a literacy classroom. Similar, to the experiences of Hispanic immigrant women in Los Angeles (Rockhill, 1987), men owned the public space in Boyabat in the 1980s and women did not go out

of the house without their approval. They rarely went out alone, and whenever possible there would be a child, relative, or friend accompanying them. It took her two more decades and becoming a grandmother before she could choose to attend a literacy course offered by the Ministry of Education (MONE). Durgunoglu, Oney, and Kuscul (2003) reported similar experiences of women who had to wait for decades to be able to attend a literacy course offered by AÇEV due to men in their lives limiting their mobility. Their finding is particularly relevant as I conducted the current research at AÇEV as well.

Adding to the complexity of *okuma yazma* and its attendant meaning, reading rituals they seemed to change significantly depending on which book one was reading. Despite attempts to encourage people to read the *Kuran* in Turkish as a part of secularization efforts in Turkish republic's history (see Orhan, 2013 and Yavuz, 2003 for the idiosyncratic interpretation of secularism in Turkey), my family among many others has always had the holy book in Arabic, which remained mysterious to me even after I received the red ribbon of literacy as I was not taught the Arabic scripts at school. Yet, some of my peers learned how to read the *Kuran* during weekends and summers. They only had a general sense of the meaning of what they were actually reading, similar to members of the Vai community using Arabic for religious practices in Scribner and Cole's (1981) landmark study on the cognitive effects of literacy versus schooling. It was, however, a rite of passage for a lot of young boys and girls to be able to read the *Kuran* cover to cover. My mother, who was not able to decode written Turkish or Arabic, would sometimes open the *Kuran* and put her finger on the page moving it slowly line by line. She was told that Allah would appreciate her effort even if she was not able to actually read the text. She knew some parts of the *Kuran* from memory, since religious Turkish people pray five times a day using a set of Arabic prayers like almost all Muslims around the world, but she was

not reading the *Kuran* the way I was reading my geography course book to learn about the climate of the Black Sea region. I could still tell that she felt less *cahil* with the *Kuran* open in front of her. I observed my mother treat any piece of writing that she found while cleaning the house with great care as it potentially had crucial value to the survival of the family (e.g., property deeds, bank statements), but I suspect it also had something to do with how Hebraic and Islamic religious traditions have traditionally associated the written word with power and respect (Scribner, 1984) and how she treated the family *Kuran*. Years later, she did learn how to read the *Kuran* in Arabic and has read to me from the *Kuran* a few times via Skype, which brings me to my last point about the complexity of literacy. She still is not print literate even after spending a semester at the Turkish literacy course (there are significant improvements in her recognition of letters and numbers), but without any exaggeration, she is more capable than some of my peers in using a computer for Voice over IP software since her son moved across the Atlantic so that he could study literacy.

As this brief vignette would suggest, literacy is neither simple to define nor is it free from the social, historical, and economic history of places and people in the way it is practiced in daily life. Discourses around literacy exert tremendous power over individuals and can be used to shame or silence people or be a way for people to claim legitimacy and respectability (Bartlett, 2007). This biographical sketch (I have my parents' permission to share it here) already gives clues about how I approach literacy, a social practice, as described by the so called New Literacy Studies (NLS) theorists and researchers (Bartlett, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton et al., 2000; Baynham & Prinsloo, 2009; Collins & Blot, 2003; Gee, 1999, 2008; Prins, 2006, 2010; Street, 2003). Since the purpose of this ethnographic inquiry is to explore the perceived social support among participants in an adult literacy course at AÇEV in Istanbul and examine any

possible role that the institutions and the national literacy framework may play on the reports of the participants, the theoretical framework around literacy played a significant role in what I see and do not see in the field. I will explain how NLS has informed this study after discussing two other major discourses around literacy: functional literacy and critical literacy especially through Freire's critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Horton & Freire, 1990).

Functional Literacy

The choosing of the functional literacy approach for further discussion is by no means accidental. Functional literacy is often referred to in explaining AÇEV's approach to adult literacy (Kagıtcıbası, Goksen, & Gulgoz, 2005), and during the course of this research, I paid close attention to the way literacy is conceptualized and implemented as a program by AÇEV, especially in relation to any possible effects their approach to literacy may have on women learners' relationships inside and outside of the classroom. One of the earliest definitions of functional literacy was offered by Gray (1956) for a UNESCO report that turned out to be very influential in popularizing the term. It is important to remember—as I hope my mother's experiences have made clear—that different definitions of reading and writing are grounded in specific discourses about literacy, about learning, and about the learner (Papen, 2005), and they shape the substance and style of educational programs (Scribner, 1984). As Gray (1956) suggested:

a person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group. (p. 24)

On the surface, functional literacy is a more sophisticated approach than reducing literacy to a simple cognitive skill of being able to read and write your name, for example, which used to be considered the hallmark of being literate (Scribner, 1984). In the earlier framework, literacy has a binary nature, you either have it or you do not, depending on being able to read and write a simple phrase or sentence. Going a little further, functional literacy assumes that literacy is used to reach certain goals in certain situations bringing more into the picture than the individual and highlighting literacy's pragmatic day-to-day use. Literacy then becomes inextricably tied to function, and it can be measured as "the level of proficiency necessary for effective performance in a range of settings and customary activities" (Scribner, 1984, p. 9). As such, it is easy to understand the appeal of functional literacy as a concept. It brings more to the focus by including "settings and customary activities" than the earlier model, but it is still understood in the closed system of the function, which can be described and used for the development of educational materials. It also expanded the definition of literacy as something that everyone needed, something more than a social virtue and recreational activity for the upper classes (Holme, 2004).

The proponents of functional literacy, however, expected much more from literacy than it serving a certain function for people in local settings. They saw literacy as "necessary for modernization, but modernization, as it develops, also impels literacy forward. Thus, the arrows of relationship are mutual and reciprocal" (Roger & Herzog, 1966, p. 192). The presumed bidirectional relationship between modernity and literacy later found its way into human capital theory in education (Baptiste, 2001), which made similar claims about literacy and labor productivity. Workplace literacy emerged since it made common sense to focus on the workplace as a setting to define customary activities. Workers' limited literacy skills were framed as the

principal cause of a nation's poor economic performance, and popular discourse on the role of literacy became very concerned about functional literacy in the workplace or its nonexistence (Castleton, 2002). Workers were often described as deficient in basic literacy skills, and clear links among illiteracy, poor job performance, and the declining economies were assumed (Hull, 1993). The overemphasis on functional literacy in the workplace has partially been the case, especially in post-industrial countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, since a simple explanation was needed for the massive job losses that came with manufacturing moving away to benefit from cheaper labor elsewhere as well as other structural transformations in the economy. The workers who were left behind ended up being blamed for what happened. In Turkey, on the other hand, workplace literacy has been tied to the aspirations of the country as an emerging industrial hub. By the 1980s, it became the principal means to "justify everything and anything connected with basic skills education for adults" (Levine, 1982, p. 249).

Similar to the arguments of the original great divide theorists (Goody & Watt, 1968; Olson, 1977) who were proponents of an autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1993a), functional literacy anticipates that the mere achievement of literacy as a skill has major consequences in terms of social development and progress and individual cognitive processes (the latter claim was first challenged by the landmark study of Scribner & Cole, 1981). Functional literacy also underplays the political processes that decide what function people would end up serving in their society. Defined as the ability "to read and write adequately for carrying out the functions of the individual's role in his salient social system" (Rogers & Herzog, 1966, p. 193), it takes it for granted that certain people already have certain functions to perform in the society, and although it is assumed that acquiring literacy, for example, may increase the upward mobility of some workers, the primary role of literacy is to help them better serve their

taken-for-granted roles ignoring the historical and material conditions that have determined where they would end up in the society. The ignorance of the socio-economic and historical forces that have created the current moment in history and the politics of literacy have devastating implications especially for the people who are on the margins of the society. As Holme (2004) argued, functional literacy “treats the society in which we exist as an order that is not open to challenge, preparing us for the efficient but uncritical consumption of the texts that this social order produced” (p. 34). Furthermore, being functionally literate, whatever it may mean, is not enough: “as long as there are people credited with special or superior literacy skills, the least competent will remain vulnerable to discrimination” (Levine, 1982, p. 260). For the purposes of this research, I will be examining how literacy is framed and the discourses around it regarding the marginalized members of the society including poor women at AÇEV’s educational and promotional materials, and this literature will shed light into my analysis.

There were other critics of functional literacy that had more pragmatic concerns. One of the early critical analyses in the adult education field in the United States came from Valentine (1986) who argued that specific descriptions of common literacy demands that are applicable and meaningful simply were not possible, considering the different adults living in very diverse environments. Therefore, the development of a uniform national curriculum for functional literacy was equally unrealistic (Scribner, 1984; Valentine, 1986). English sociologist Levine (1982) has provided the most thorough critique of functional literacy. By its definition, he argued, functional literacy means less than full fluency, and he explained how it was conceptualized by the specialists in the American military during the World War II and how it appealed to poorer countries after Gray’s (1956) report where it was unrealistic to aim high-level competence for most of the citizens considering that many literacy programs were funded by aid. His analysis of

discourses around functional literacy indicated that it has mostly been a way for people and governments to enact their beliefs about the power of literacy, even though there was scant research evidence. He is one of the earlier proponents of approaching literacy as a social practice, and his analysis of programs in the United States and United Kingdom since the World War II is based on this perspective, which I share with him. Despite the criticisms, the prevailing rhetoric in the current policy for lifelong learning around the world revolves around global competition, skills deficit, and human capital; recommendations to remedy low levels of performance in functional literacy and numeracy among the adult population are largely determined within this rhetorical framework (Clarke, 2008). Thanks to interviews, observations, and a closer analysis of their educational, research and promotional materials, the current research will clear some of the confusion and trace the history of how AÇEV's idiosyncratic way of conceptualizing literacy has been constructed and how it has influenced the way social support is perceived in the classroom. To this end, I specifically interviewed key staff and volunteer academics that had a decisive role in the way AÇEV's approach to adult literacy education has been established, and I will report how AÇEV as a nexus on a lattice of institutions implementing and studying adult literacy ended up with a unique version of functional literacy. I argue that the transformation of functional literacy as an educational approach was shaped by AÇEV's response to the realities of the field, changes in the socio-political and cultural milieu in Turkey, and AÇEV's collaboration with national and supra-national actors.

Like education in general, adult literacy can be a means either to maintain the status quo or to challenge and transform it. This emancipatory discourse around adult literacy education was spearheaded by the Brazilian popular educator Paulo Freire in the Americas (Freire, 2000).

2005; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Horton & Freire, 1990), and he provided some of the analytical tools for the critique of functional literacy, which I will discuss next.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is relevant to this research as well, and requires further discussion here, for two reasons. First, critical literacy is a foundation for my analysis, given its emphasis on the historical and material context (i.e., the structure of adult literacy programs in Turkey) in explaining the present moment (Freire, 2005); it complements the historicist approach of New Literacy Studies. Second, in the Freirean framework, literacy is not reduced to the treatment of letters and words in the mechanical domain (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire (2001) wrote at length about the political nature of educational practices and argued against the neo-liberal perspective that presents education and literacy as inherently neutral, which are perspectives congruent with the way I have observed literacy is practiced and provisioned in Turkey. As such, Freire and his intellectual relatives (Freire, 1995), theorists and researchers residing in the global north (McLaren & Leonard, 1993; McLaren & Lankshear, 1994) and—in my view—in Turkey (Bicakci, 2012; Ozturk, 2011), will provide the analytical lens for me to examine how literacy programs are funded in Turkey, and especially by AÇEV, and its implications on the perceived social support that is available to participating adults.

My discussion of critical literacy focuses on Freire due to his historical significance as a practitioner-theorist in this school of thought. Moreover, his work illustrates some of the basic arguments of critical approaches to literacy very well. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005), arguably Freire's most popular and influential book, introduces the notion of “banking education,” which limits students' range of action to receiving, filing, and storing deposits of information. This is a false communication, a monologue rather than a dialogue according to

Freire. He criticized banking education for treating people as objects and explored education as cultural action and as a means to transform oppressive social structures. He proposes a problem-posing education that is based on the assumption that education can help the oppressed develop power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves. They are expected to come to see the world not as a fixed reality but as a reality in the making through problem-posing education. This is diametrically opposed to how functional literacy presents “the society in which we exist as an order that is not open to challenge” (Holme, 2004, p. 34). Freire is a Marxist in his critique of the market forces (see Freire, 1996 for the way he simultaneously draws from Marx and Christianity) and a Hegelian historicist; as such his analysis of literacy includes the historical and material explanations for the way the world is, in terms of distribution of labor and resources in the society. Freire’s distinction between fixed reality versus reality in the making proved instrumental during the data analysis of AÇEV’s curricular materials. It is one of the foundations of critical thinking, and it enabled me to delineate parts of the materials aiming to help the participating women question how gender roles and expectations are constructed and sustained in the Turkish society.

From the beginning, Freire (2005) pointed out that this is “a pedagogy which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity” (p. 48). This approach is an indication of the emphasis that he put on the necessity of a participatory approach to literacy education. According to Freire, every reading of the word is preceded by reading of the world. Reading the world, of course, requires a political awareness and understanding of issues of power and agency as well as historical forces that have privileged certain members of the society while marginalizing others. In fact, Freire vehemently denies claims of the impartiality of education. He emphasized that literacy is ideological by its

nature, and depending on whose literacy (word) is favored, certain segments of the society are oppressed as they are robbed of their right to “name the world.” There is evidence that programs inspired by Freirean principles do provide opportunities for participants to access social support (Prins, 2006; Ramdeholl, 2010), however it seems that in these programs, solidarity among the participants emerged as a unexpected consequence of taking part in the program. I argue that “reading the world” in terms of gender disparity in various variables from educational attainment to wealth accumulation is one of the basic tenets of AÇEV’s adult literacy programs, and Freire’s perspective on the political nature of educational activity guided how I approached data collection and analysis.

Freire’s thought evolved during the following three decades. He revisited *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and critically examined its main arguments in *Pedagogy of Hope* (2004) making revisions and refocusing his attention to the concept of hope as an integral component of progressive education. In his later work, Freire espoused a series of insights from postmodern thinkers, but the modernist roots of his ontology, epistemology, and ethic could still be detected, especially the way he argued for a universal human nature and ethic to undergird his theories of literacy and its emancipatory power (Gungor, 2012; Roberts, 2000). Freire’s critique of the educational practices are mostly tied to class; non-mainstream students to him refer to those who come from impoverished homes, which ignores the multiple identities people have to negotiate in the classroom. However, his pedagogy still provides some potent analytical tools to discuss the myriad ways literacy is used to silence and marginalize people, in this case poor, immigrant women living in Istanbul. His analysis also urged the necessity of transforming the larger structures of the society for more justice in the distribution of resources and less human suffering, rather than expecting literacy and education to be ultimate remedies to society’s ills. I

find Freire's approach to literacy similar to that of New Literacy Studies (NLS) in that both see literacy as an ideological phenomenon. In the last part of this paper, I will discuss NLS as it relates to my own research.

“New” Literacy Studies

Despite the name, this approach to literacy is not particularly new. Scribner and Cole's (1981) work with the Vai, a small West African group; Heath's (1983) *Way with Words: Language Life and Work in Communities and Classrooms*, on the reading practices of three diverse southern communities in the United States; Rockhill's (1987) work with Hispanic immigrant women in Los Angeles and Levine's (1982); and Gee's (1989) historical critique of the assumptions behind the mainstream understandings of literacy are some of the early examples of researchers and theorists that framed literacy as a social practice. Based in linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, they challenged the notion of a “great divide” between literacy and orality. Furthermore, they “argued that ‘literacy’ is not one thing. Rather, there are as many different ‘literacies’ as there are socioculturally distinctive practices into which written language is incorporated” (Gee, 2004, p. 83). As a result, within the NLS framework, literacy can only be understood when studied in the context of social, cultural, historical, political, and economic practices of which they are an inseparable part. Recognition of multiple literacies that change depending on time and space that also are embedded in power relations is the distinguishing characteristic of these studies (Collins & Blot, 2003; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Street, 1993b). NLS rejects the view of literacy as a neutral mechanic skill, independent of social context, that will lead to the same predetermined consequences such as political participation and economic prosperity in every context where it is introduced. This does not mean that literacy does not play a role in money-making or even the economic

transformation of a country (Brandt, 2001); it just means that the relationship is much more complex.

The relationship between literacy and emancipation from oppression is also more complex than campaign materials for international NGOs such as AÇEV would suggest. Through the stories of women who acquired literacy skills, yet who are still oppressed by the men in rural Nepal, Ahearn (2002) for example, described a situation where the learning the mechanics of literacy did not result in emancipation of women, in and of itself. Rather, it contributed to creation of literacy practices that were not intended by the Western development rhetoric in the first place. In fact, the unintended consequences of participating in literacy program is a running theme in NLS research (Prins, 2006), which indicates how difficult it is to anticipate how the local community, let alone a country, will change when print literacy is introduced.

Similarly, I do not assume that teaching print-literacy to the poor, disfranchised, and marginalized people of Turkey will enhance their cognitive skills, improve their economic prospects, and help them become better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that contributed to their “illiteracy” in the first place. I also do not assume that any reading and writing skills they acquire will change the way that they perceive social support around them for the better. Instead, I have taken the time to study how people participating in a literacy course at AÇEV practice literacy inside and outside the classroom (the latter only through self-report) and to explore how those practices interact with the way they perceive social support. The denial of the simple cause-effect relationship between literacy and development does not disregard the role literacy, or the lack thereof, may play creating or maintaining oppressive social structures in societies (Gee, 1989; Street, 1993b). It just means that as a

researcher situating myself in the NLS tradition, I believe that the way that role plays out changes immensely based on the way literacies are practiced and the social, economic, and historical context in which these practices are embedded.

In this chapter, I have explained the theoretical framework that has guided this ethnographic research from its inception, along with the analysis and conclusions. Ethnography of literacy is the primary research methodology in New Literacy Studies (Baynham, 2004) and is very capable at description of such contexts. In the next chapter, I will turn my attention to the various ethnographic tools that I have utilized and provide information about the research design, data collection, and analysis.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

Creswell (2007) listed four paradigms or worldviews that are commonly behind the practices of qualitative researchers, namely post-positivism, social constructivism, advocacy/participatory research, and pragmatism. My approach is pragmatist in both the philosophical and day-to-day meanings of the term, which are related but distinct from each other. Richard Rorty's (1979, 1989, 1999) work on pragmatist philosophy has always been in the background during the research process, and it has informed my philosophical stance on academic inquiry (See Gungor, 2012 for a discussion of some of the basic tenets of Rortian pragmatism). Rorty (1989) recommended sticking to questions about what works for particular purposes (p. 148), and this principle has shaped my perspective on research considerably. As such, I believe that research goals and questions specifying what is to be attained at the end of the process should prescribe the methods chosen. The focus on the research questions requires the researcher to use the best tools available for the task, which at times may involve employing methods and techniques from multiple research traditions.

Creswell's (2007) list of paradigms can be confusing since a researcher with social constructivist or positivist tendencies in their approach to ontology and epistemology can be pragmatic in the way they structure their research projects. After all, the word pragmatism used in day-to-day life is separate from the philosophical school of thought whose proponents include John Dewey along with Richard Rorty in the United States, and Creswell (2007) seems to use these terms interchangeably. Yet, I will elaborate on his categorization to further explain where I situate myself as a researcher. Creswell argued that individuals who use the pragmatist perspective usually employ a variety of methods of data collection that will best answer the

research questions. In my case, I used data collection methods that are traditionally used by ethnographers, but I also employed techniques from the toolkits of other research traditions when necessary as the research progressed. For example, during the data analysis process, I followed a social constructivist approach to data analysis that is based on the qualitative research tradition of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

In this chapter, I will first discuss the approaches to ethnographic research that have significantly shaped the research design. I will particularly focus on issues around travel, fieldwork, and time in the context of the research goals. Next, I will provide background information about AÇEV to clarify all the actors described in research design considering the NGO's organizational complexity and diversity of the research participants. I will continue with research design: research sites, sampling and recruitment strategies, data collection and analysis methods. Last, I will discuss my identity as a researcher and how I negotiated that identity in the field. I will conclude with discussing the trustworthiness of the research.

Ethnography

At every stage of the research process, I have asked what data collection and analysis methods would help me better answer the research questions, rather than trying to remain within the boundaries of ethnography as defined by anthropologists and sociologists. Wolcott (1999) made a distinction between “employing a set of research procedures that ethnographers share in common with many other fieldworkers—with an emphasis on data gathering techniques—and employing those approaches with the intent of producing a full-blown ethnography” (p. 13). He did acknowledge that in practice the lines are not very clear, and the distinction is one of degree. On Wolcott's continuum, my research project would be closer to the former camp, namely people who pick and choose from the ethnographer's toolkit.

Both Wolcott (1980, 1987, 1999) and Rist (1981) are critical of some educational researchers' interpretations of ethnography ignoring what the term has meant in anthropology, where it has been used historically, and the distinguishing features of it "that overly enthusiastic educator[s] embrace" (Wolcott, 1980, p. 56). As an educator myself, I will be seeking a place in the large tent of ethnography taking note of Rist's (1980) and Wolcott's (1980, 1987, 1999) critique based on the lack of rigor they observed in educational research defining itself as ethnography. However, I hope, in the end, the evaluation of this research is based on how well I have answered the research questions specified below rather than how well my research design will fit into an ethnographic framework based on a certain interpretation of what is considered proper ethnographic research. I have used ethnographic tools in the "compressed time mode" as described by Jeffrey and Troman (2004) as a guide map for the research project. Jeffrey and Troman compellingly explained how an ethnographic research project can be carried out in a "compressed time mode" without falling into the discredited practice of "blitzkrieg ethnography" (Rist, 1980, p. 8).

The research processes were guided by the following research questions.

1. How do participants in AÇEV adult literacy programs perceive social support within the programs?
2. How do instructional activities in the classroom and AÇEV's approach toward literacy shape networking opportunities for participants and the availability of social support?
3. How does the national literacy framework (e.g., rules and regulations on credentialing students' literacy) shape the way students are connected to each other and social support available in AÇEV programs?

I have used ethnography as a way to study literacy practices, which can seem ironic considering the early perspectives on literacy in ethnographic research: a “lingering anthropological prejudice” (Boyarin 1993, p. 2) that describe literate cultures as less authentic, less anthropological, than cultures in which oral communication is dominant. However, things have changed so much in how ethnography is conceptualized, especially in educational research, that ethnography of literacy is the chief research methodology in the so-called New Literacy Studies (NLS; Baynham, 2004). NLS will be informing my understanding of literacy during the study, therefore situating this research in the ethnographic research tradition is consistent with the way I conceptualize literacy.

When I use the terms ethnography and ethnographer in the remaining parts of this dissertation to refer to my own research, I will be using the terms with the understanding that I do not argue that I will be engaged in doing a full-blown ethnography (Wolcott, 1999). Rather, as I attempted to explain above, I see my research as qualitative research employing ethnographic tools in addressing certain research questions. However, it is rather convoluted to make this distinction on every occasion, therefore I will be using the terms ethnography and ethnographer for the sake of brevity from here on.

Space/Travel

One of the common themes in the way ethnography is described is the discussion of physical space and travel especially while discussing fieldwork. It is impossible to define ethnography without talking about the way fieldwork and “the field” is socially constructed in such a way that have required the ethnographer to travel to distant places. It was a prerequisite for the outcome of the research to be considered real and authentic anthropology (Caputo, 2000). Choosing fieldwork sites that are far away from the ethnographer’s place of residence and work

has also been a means to establish distance in supporting anthropologists' claims of professionalism (Amit, 2000). Wolcott (1999) quipped that for many ethnographers, it did not matter where the place was at all as long as it was dramatically different from where the researchers usually lived. Travel was a crucial aspect of this research project as well. Most of the data was collected in Istanbul over a five-week period. I also made observations and conducted informal interviews when AÇEV general manager and academic adviser for the adult literacy programs were in Washington, DC to accept an award from the Library of Congress. Furthermore, I have used telephone calls, e-mail, and Voice over IP technologies to contact some of the research participants. The data collection before and after my trip to Istanbul involved regular interactions with the members of the adult literacy department in Istanbul, volunteer teachers, and the academic adviser to adult literacy programs, Aydin Durgunoglu, who resides in the United States.

Fieldwork

Ethnographic fieldwork is so vital to anthropology that it is understood as the hallmark of social and cultural anthropology distinguishing it from sociology (Amit, 2000). Blasco and Wardle (2007) observed three different approaches to anthropology, and by association ethnography: (a) those who view anthropology as a science and ethnography as the tool that makes it possible to attain objective representations of society, (b) those who see anthropology and ethnography on a similar plane with literature and art, hence more of a part of humanities than social science, and (c) those who seek a middle ground, stressing the subjectivity of their accounts but nonetheless trying to construct communicable knowledge of particular people, places, and cultures. Geertz (1971) went a step further when he set his goal as discovering "what contributions parochial understandings can make to comprehensive ones, what leads to general,

broad-stroke interpretations particular, intimate findings can produce” (p. vii). As Clifford (1986) explained, the first group does not have a strong following anymore since the critique of colonial representations of people and their cultures under the influence of the west gave way to arguments about the limits of representation itself (p. 10).

Pragmatism has been on the forefront of the arguments on representation of reality in science since the central concern of pragmatists is not a “general theory of representation, a theory which will divide culture up into the areas which represent reality well, those which represent it less well, and those which do not represent it at all (despite their pretense of doing so)” (Rorty, 1979, p. 3). I see my own research in line with Rorty’s and Geertz’s views; it will not produce any truth(s) divorced from time and space or my biases as a researcher, yet I hope that the thick description I create in answering my research questions will help researchers in other contexts in designing inquiries of their own for their own research goals.

Time

I found Jeffrey and Troman’s (2004) discussion regarding different time modes of doing ethnography useful in explaining my position toward time in the field. They start their discussion by acknowledging that ethnographic research is never fully completed and there is always some aspect that could have been explored further under different conditions. Yet, in real-life research conditions, there are many personal, institutional, and practical restraints on research design, and time in the field is restricted. A short period of intense ethnographic research requires the researchers to live at the research site for anything from a few days to a month in the “compressed time mode” (p. 538). Jeffrey and Troman (2004) recommended seeking access to all the relevant places at a research site and as many people as possible. Observational field notes are a vital portion of the data since it may be hard to talk to people when the researcher is so

involved being on the site. To manage the large amount of data collected in a small amount of time, I started organizing my observations and perspectives while on the site (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Their approach to ethnography is more context-led than interview-dominant since the time available can be more effectively used through observations. They recommend basing the analysis, interpretations, and theorizing in the other relevant research studies as a broader context to make up for some of the gaps that may appear due to limited field time. I have taken all their recommendations as guideposts before, during, and after data collection in the field.

Selection of the appropriate form of ethnography depends on the contingent circumstances and the main purpose of the research (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p. 535). In my case, contingent circumstances dictated that I could only be in the field in Istanbul, Turkey for about five weeks. Since the length of time spent in the field is a crucial defining characteristic of an ethnography (Rist, 1981; Wolcott 1980, 1987. 1999, 2005), I simply had to deal with this seeming limitation. In certain ways, the fieldwork had already started in terms of being engaged with the research site and key actors. Therefore, the research process in general and data collection in particular were not limited to the five weeks that I was physically in Istanbul.

More importantly, I had been familiar with AÇEV's work in adult literacy since 2003 when I started a master's degree in adult education at Bogazici University, and I had been closely following published academic research conducted by AÇEV and academics affiliated with AÇEV since then. I had been in contact with various staff members of AÇEV from the time when I spent an afternoon with the assistant to the general manager in late 2009 discussing the possibility of doing my dissertation research there. I had been diligently keeping track of all e-mail and phone correspondence regarding the study and writing short memos on my experiences. I had already conducted two informal interviews with key informants as a

preparation for the research proposal. I had negotiated access to the field with the gatekeepers (Brewer, 2000), and I was still working on specifying my fieldwork role when I left for Turkey. I agree with Jeffrey and Troman (2004) that ethnographic time is not limited to “a lengthy and sustained period in the field prior to writing” (p. 535). I have extended my “time in the field,” or at the very least, my engagement with this research project, using relatively recent technological tools like VoIP to conduct video interviews recording the video on both ends before and after the data collection process in Istanbul. Similar to Caputo (2000), I strongly believe that technology has contributed to the blurring of the boundaries between field and home. Many of the people that I interviewed, the AÇEV staff members and academic advisers, have access to broadband internet and web cameras so that the interviews were conducted “face- to-face.”

Furthermore, I had strong relationships with a variety of people living in Istanbul, including some of the faculty members in the adult education program at Bogazici University who agreed to help me collect documents on AÇEV (educational materials, academic articles published in Turkish journals, and conference proceedings that are not available in the United States). As a result, I was able to spend the five weeks that I had in Istanbul primarily focusing on people, situations, and interactions that I could not learn about using technological tools and colleagues. Very relevant to the discussion of social support in this study, this study itself was only possible thanks to help and support of people with whom I share a social support network, and who, in return, did above and beyond what could have been expected from people who live in one of the busiest, fastest-growing urban areas in the world.

Background

AÇEV is a large NGO offering various educational programs which mainly focus on early childhood education. The flagship program is the Mother-Child Education Program that

has been in existence since the founding of AÇEV in 1993; it is currently run by the Ministry of Education (MONE) in all 81 districts in Turkey. The Mother-Child Education Program aims to improve children's educational outcomes through teaching mothers how they can support their pre-school age children's development at home, and as such it requires the parents to be print-literate to be able to do the activities at home. After observing that many of the parents who could have been targeted for the Mother-Child Education Program were not print-literate, AÇEV decided to design and implement an adult literacy program targeting those mothers who could not have been recruited into the Mother-Child Education Program. The insistence of Ayşe Ozyegin, one of the founders, the current president, and the primary private funder of AÇEV also was a decisive factor in providing adult literacy education. This effort resulted in the Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) in 1995, designed in cooperation with academics Banu Oney and Aydın Durgunoglu. The current assistant to the general manager interviewed for this research, Hilal Kuscul, was the professional AÇEV staff in the initial three-person team, and as a result was able to trace the evolution of the program, which I argue, has changed so much that the name "functional literacy" does not adequately describe it anymore.

Since then, AÇEV has expanded their programs to try to include men as well, and it now offers the Father Support Program and parenthood seminars even though, at least in the adult literacy classes I observed, the participants are almost entirely women. In 1998, FALP II was designed and implemented as it was deemed that the 120-hour FALP was not providing sufficient class time to teach literacy and basic numeracy. FALP II was later revised to become the Advanced Literacy and Access to Information Program (ALAIIP), the adult literacy program that aims to increase fluency and proficiency of the newly-print literate adults. For the purposes of this research project, I only observed Functional Adult Literacy and Advanced Literacy and

Access to Information Programs at four different program sites. AÇEV also offers a web-based adult literacy program, Read and Write with AÇEV, which combines both FALP and ALAIP programs along with the Ministry of Education's Level II literacy program. Lastly, there is a recently designed and implemented basic computer literacy program, which also was not included among the program sites visited. The two recent computer-based programs are among indications of the changes in how the NGO approaches literacy, albeit one that requires future inquiry.

AÇEV is a very highly structured and institutionalized organization, especially for a Turkish Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in education. As such, there are specific units responsible from different programs even though some fluidity and movement seems to exist among different units, especially during short-term projects funded by various national and international actors. These days, the Literacy and Women's Support Department at AÇEV is responsible for all the adult literacy programs (preparing recruitment and curricular materials, designing and implementing new programs such as the computer based initiatives, and planning and carrying out training programs for volunteer teachers) in collaboration with academic advisers and in consultation with the boards of trustees, directors, and senior management. They make the strategic decisions managing and overseeing programs in eight districts, together with the district of Istanbul. Their office—or more precisely a set of cubicles in the AÇEV main offices—is in Mecidiyekoy, and they get to work on various other AÇEV projects at times. Even though I spent about two weeks at AÇEV main offices, and I was made to feel welcome by everyone that I met, my interactions were primarily with the members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department and Hilal Kuscul, assistant to general manager. I inquired about

other departments in AÇEV's offices and other programs that they offered inasmuch as they were relevant to the adult literacy programs.

Research Design

The research design involved a short period of intense ethnographic research in the “compressed time mode” (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p. 538) in Istanbul at four AÇEV adult literacy program sites and the main offices. However, the data collection had started before traveling to Turkey via telephone and VoIP interviews, and it continued after returning back from the field after five weeks, and it also included e-mail communications. For the purposes of this project, most of the data collection methods were qualitative, including interviews, observations, field notes, and analysis of program documents, and still photographs. A survey instrument, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Eker & Arkar, 1995; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) was used to triangulate the aforementioned data collection methods combining qualitative data with quantitative data. Comparing different sources of data enabled me to check the reliability of the data (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) and look for “convergence, corroboration and correspondence of results” across data sources (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989, p. 259). That being said, the majority of the data sources, and the design in general, were qualitative in nature; it was flexible, iterative, naturalistic, and resulted in thick descriptions that are reflexive about the ways in which research the analysis and the conclusions are constructed (Gibson & Brown, 2009). It employed ethnographic tools, albeit not with the purpose of creating a full-blown ethnography.

Sampling and Recruitment Strategies

Sampling strategies. A combination of convenience and purposeful sampling was followed as the sampling strategy. Once I decided that I was going to study perceptions of social support in AÇEV adult literacy programs, the population I could sample was limited to women learners in AÇEV programs in Istanbul. To be clear, I did not purposefully keep men out of the study sample. Literacy programs are so gendered that there were only few men in the programs and none of them could be a part of the study even though one showed initial interest. I focused on Istanbul since it was not feasible to collect data in the other seven *il* (districts) where there are AÇEV adult literacy programs in Turkey.

As I discussed earlier, Istanbul is larger than some of the countries in Europe in size and population. Thus, I used several criteria to choose the four program sites where the research was eventually conducted. First, I chose the FALP and ALAIP programs as they were significantly longer than the recently designed and implemented computer literacy program. This was done based on the assumption that total time spent in the classroom is influential in allowing the women learners to connect with each other. Second, the crucial role that field advisers play in the implementation of the programs became very apparent based on the initial interviews with the Literacy and Women's Support Department staff in Mecidiyekoy offices. Therefore, I decided that I wanted to observe field advisers interact with volunteer teachers and women learners. This decision meant that I visited four program sites since there are four field advisers in Istanbul; two on the Asian side and two on the European side of the city. Two programs were implementing the FALP curriculum while the other two were implementing the ALAIP curriculum.

The specific sites that I visited with each field adviser were determined by field advisers and Literacy and Women's Support Department staff in Meciyekoy, based on their concerns and

priorities. We had a meeting on the second week of my stay in Mecidiyekoy attended by all four field advisers. The field advisers had already contacted teachers in various programs before this meeting and asked them if they and their students would be interested in being a part of a research study. The field advisers knew that I had a short amount of time for the research and there was not room for false starts. Besides, the programs needed to have “a good connection” with AÇEV. This is because I did not have formal permission from the Ministry of National Education (MONE) to conduct research, and although AÇEV plays the most important part in the designing and implementation of these programs, they are still MONE programs.

Another criterion was that the programs needed to be open long enough for social connections to be made. When I talked to Mutlu Yasa after the meeting and told her the list of the criteria above to ensure I did not miss anything, she told me that there was one other criterion that the field managers had in mind while they were talking about programs that I could visit: the programs would have different age groups represented. She told me that some programs may have a certain age group over-represented, and the field advisers suggested that based on what they knew of the research I was going to conduct, it would be helpful to conduct it at a location where women learners of various ages attended the program.

Participant recruitment and selection. Using the criteria above, we chose four classrooms to visit in four different sites. The field advisers agreed to accompany me to the four sites for the initial visit. We communicated over the phone to figure out the logistics and they each met me an hour prior to classroom visit so that I could tell them more about the study. Once in the classroom, I went through the consent forms in front of the class and recruited the women learners to take the MSPSS (n= 30). A subset of the MSPSS takers also agreed to let me interview them on record (n=16). The teachers (n=4) and the field advisers (n=4) had already

agreed to be interviewed along with the staff from the main offices (n=4). With the academics that I interviewed in Turkey and in the United States (n=3), I selected a total of 31 participants for recorded interviews and 30 participants for the surveys.

Research Sites

The data collection in the field for this research project indicated that places seemingly far away from each other are connected in various ways. I will also be examining those connections especially in the way functional literacy is defined at AÇEV (Kagıtcıbaşı, Goksen, & Gulgoz, 2005) under the influence of UNESCO (Gray, 1956) and Western European and North American academic discourses (Levine, 1982). However, for the purposes of this study, the field as a social construction has still been a useful tool in shaping and defining the boundaries of the research process. As a researcher, I embrace critical examinations of some of the traditionally sacred elements of the ethnographic research process such as the field and fieldwork. However, I see no reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The physical field consisted of AÇEV main offices in Mecidiyekoy, four AÇEV literacy program sites in Istanbul, and the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Data collected in these spaces was complemented by phone calls, Voice over IP video conferences, and e-mail messages.

I visited four program sites, and to protect the participants' privacy, I will use pseudonyms for each, namely Roadville, Riverside, Smoky Valley, and Rainy Hill. I will also use pseudonyms for participants and volunteer teachers. I will refer to the professional AÇEV staff with their actual names since they all wished that I should do so. Furthermore, a simple online search on the official AÇEV website would be enough to yield their names and roles in the institution. All of the sites offered adult literacy courses to almost exclusively women. I

observed two literacy curriculums offered by AÇEV, Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) for beginners and Advanced Literacy and Access to Information Program (ALAIP) for adults who have completed FALP or who have been assessed by the teachers to be proficient enough in print literacy to attend ALAIP rather than FALP.

However, I acknowledge that the four research sites were embedded in discrete neighborhoods despite observed similarity among the women learners: poor women (lower middle class and working class, as described by a volunteer teacher) who have recently moved to the city from various parts of Anatolia. The most striking example is the Alevi spiritual center I visited in Rainy Hill. This community differed markedly from the other sites. For example, buildings were covered with graffiti venerating heroes of the leftist organizations in Turkey, which have had close ties to the Alevi community since the Cold War. I walked by *devrim* (revolution) tea garden on my way to take the bus back to Mecidiyekoy every time I was in the Rainy Hill neighborhood. According to one of the members of the congregation at the *cemevi*, the place of worship for people belonging to Alevi faith, at the time of the fieldwork public transportation buses did not enter the neighborhood at night because they were attacked and sometimes burned down by protestors during political demonstrations. These protests were happening regularly in the tense political context of Turkey after the Gezi protests and before the presidential elections.

Because I argue what social support means is constructed within the social, historical, and economical history of a people, it is plausible that social support is perceived and enacted in ways shaped by the particular lived experiences of Alevi people in Turkey. However, such a singular focus on the Alevi experience and its implications on the way social support is conceptualized is beyond the scope of this research. I instead assumed that even though I visited

four communities, the similarities outweighed the differences. After all, the literacy course at the Rainy Hill site was open to people of other faiths. Hence, the literacy classroom was a place where Alevis and Sunnis interacted and shared their lived experiences; ethnic Kurds and Turks did the same in the Riverside and Smoky Valley classrooms. That being said, I do admit that the socio-historical construction of social support in various ethnic and religious communities warrants further study.

The classrooms I visited in Rainy Hill and Riverside were following the FALP curriculum, while the classrooms in Roadville and Smoky Valley were following the latter, ALAIP. It just so happened that both FALP courses were on the European side of the city, and the ALAIP courses were on the Asian side. The neighborhoods were on different shores of the Bosphorus; however, the communities in which the programs were embedded showed exceeding similarity. All were working class neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty and lower levels of educational attainment. They are surrounded by glitzier and wealthier neighborhoods for the most part, even though urban renewal and gentrification were also in process within the neighborhoods. Despite the continental divide and use of different curricular materials, the implementation of FALP and ALAIP programs were also very similar to each other. The participating women in both kinds of courses were relatively new immigrants to the city from various parts of the country, and as I learned from the field advisers, many of the volunteer teachers offered both programs based on demand during different times of the year. For instance, the teacher in Smoky Valley, Elif, has had pretty much the same classroom the last seven months; they started with the FALP and most of the participating women continued with ALAIP.

Riverside is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Istanbul. The program there was hosted by the municipality, which is one of the most established municipalities in the city. As such, the

municipality's adult education center offered generous space for educational activities. The garden of the center felt like an oasis tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the city with high walls. On one side of the garden was a small building where they brewed tea and sold snacks for program participants to enjoy before and after the classes. Even though there was a large iron door to the garden, the door was always open and welcoming. The center was also a hub for other social services that the municipality provided for its inhabitants, and the staff employed by the municipality directed the women learners to other organizations associated with the municipality.

Rainy Hill program was hosted by an Alevi spiritual center, one of the largest in the city. The neighborhood was certainly not as old as the one in Riverside, however in the fast expanding city of Istanbul, it has been around since the 1970s, making it one of the older neighborhoods now closer to the centers of the city. The inhabitants were mostly Alevi and very politicized compared to those in the three other communities. There is a historic link between Alevis and leftist movements in Turkey, and some of the streets in the neighborhood were covered in oppositional political graffiti. Walking with me to the bus station after attending a funeral, one of the members of the congregation remembered that the roads were unpaved and muddy when she moved there three decades ago. She also warned me jokingly that I should not take photos with my large camera with interchangeable lenses since the young people of the neighborhood may think that I was an undercover cop. The center was large, built slowly in time with community resources, and it had one wing solely dedicated to educational activities. There was ample space for the women learners to socialize and a place to get tea and snacks.

On the Asian side, Roadville was the most formal of the four educational institutions. The program there was hosted by the People's Education Center, which shared the building with the

offices of the local Ministry of National Education Directorate. The building was used as a K12 school until recently. Although it had a large garden surrounding the rectangular building with high walls, it was mostly used as a parking lot, and there were no one socializing outside of the building despite nice weather in 2014 spring while I was there. The People's Education Center (PEC) had to share the building with MONE administrators responsible for the whole school district in Roadville, and as a result classroom space was limited. In fact, the AÇEV program I observed there had to stop a month before the planned date since the PEC needed the space for an exhibit. Across Turkey, PECs vary widely in size and organization. They are staffed by teachers and administrators who are government employees, and there is one in every *ilçe* (an administrative unit smaller than districts and larger than villages). There are approximately 900 PECs across the country. Contrary to the centers run by the municipalities, they are closely tied to the MONE and its policies, goals, and regulations.

The Smoky Valley program was hosted by the local PEC as well. However, this was not the main PEC building; instead it was classroom space shared with the *muhtar's* (elected leader of the neighborhood) office. It was the smallest physical space among the four sites, with two classrooms on the second floor of a small building. There were a few benches on the side of the building where women could wait for the start of the class and gather together during the breaks. Similar to the other neighborhoods, it was predominantly working-class people living in the community. The women learners and others I informally interviewed in the neighborhood in Riverside, Rainy Hill, and Smoky Valley spoke of rapid changes in terms of gentrification and urban renewal. Although all four programs were in relatively modest parts of the city in terms of wealth, luxury condos and high-rises were visible, most strikingly in Smoky Valley where they circled around the deep valley.

Although the program sites were not in the same community, they were all in the city of Istanbul and served very comparable populations: poor women who are relatively recent internal immigrants to the city with little to no schooling. Istanbul spans two continents: Riverside and Rainy Hill programs were on the European side while Roadville and Smoky Valley were on the Asian side. The communities where the sites were situated had distinct characteristics, however they were all occupied by largely working-class people, and these characteristics proved less influential than the institution that AÇEV collaborated with in that community and that provided the physical space for the program.

All four of the teachers were volunteers trained by AÇEV using a highly structured curriculum. Volunteer teachers follow the detailed curriculum prepared for them using the literacy primers and teachers' manuals. They all receive an intensive 13-day (2.5 week) training before teaching at AÇEV programs, and there are continuing education activities and yearly meetings to get their feedback in making decisions on program revisions and inform them of the changes in the programs. They are also almost entirely women, and for good reason too, since they discuss issues in the FALP such as reproductive health and family planning, that may be deemed inappropriate for men in Turkey. Hence, despite being in different parts of the city, the programs were similar to each other.

Data Sources

The data sources for this ethnographic study include:

1. Semi-structured interviews with
 - Professional AÇEV staff (from the main offices, and the field)
 - Academic adviser to the adult literacy programs at AÇEV
 - Volunteer teachers in the programs

- Participants
 - Key informants on the role of NGOs in Turkish adult literacy landscape (two professors from the adult education program at Bogazici University)
2. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)
 3. Field-notes for observations in the classrooms and at the AÇEV headquarters
 4. Document analysis of the FALP and ALAIP curricular materials

Table 3- 1

Interview Participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Research Site</u>	<u>Role</u>
Ada	Female	Smoky Valley	Student
Bahar	Female	Smoky Valley	Student
Ceyda	Female	Smoky Valley	Student
Deniz	Female	Smoky Valley	Student
Elif	Female	Smoky Valley	Teacher
Feray	Female	Roadville	Student
Gamze	Female	Roadville	Student
Irmak	Male	Roadville	Teacher
Handan	Female	Riverside	Student
Jale	Female	Riverside	Student
Kevser	Female	Riverside	Student
Lila	Female	Riverside	Student
Mavi	Female	Riverside	Student
Nihan	Female	Riverside	Teacher
Oya	Female	Rainy Hill	Student
Pelin	Female	Rainy Hill	Student
Rana	Female	Rainy Hill	Student
Remziye	Female	Rainy Hill	Student
Selin	Female	Rainy Hill	Student
Tezay	Female	Rainy Hill	Teacher
Serin	Female	Asian Side	Field Adviser
Ismen	Female	Asian Side	Field Adviser
Cantimur	Female	European Side	Field Adviser
Aslan	Female	European Side	Field Adviser
Yasa	Female	AÇEV HQ	Literacy & Women's Support Dept.
Canturk	Female	AÇEV HQ	Literacy & Women's Support Dept.
Gencay	Female	AÇEV HQ	Literacy & Women's Support Dept.
Kuscul	Female	AÇEV HQ	Literacy & Women's Support Dept.
Unluhisarcikli	Female	Academic	Academic

Okcabol	Male	Academic	Academic
Durgunoglu	Female	Academic	Academic

As Table 3-1 demonstrates, the AÇEV staff interviewed for the study include three members of the Literacy and Women's Support team in AÇEV main offices, who are responsible for program development and evaluation of all adult literacy programs including those outside of Istanbul as well as the assistant to the general manager and veteran of the adult literacy programs, Hilal Kuscul. I also interviewed four field advisers in the district of Istanbul as well as the four volunteer teachers in the sites that I visited. I interviewed two professors studying adult education in Turkey to help contextualize what I was observing and hearing in the classes and AÇEV main offices in Mecidiyekoy. After returning back to the United States, I contacted Aydin Durgunoglu since her role in the design of the programs became apparent during the fieldwork, and I interviewed her via VoIP call. I contacted the members of the Literacy and Women's Support team multiple times in the last year, and I took notes on our exchanges which primarily focused on discussions of my findings.

The second set of professional AÇEV staff (along with the members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department) I interviewed were the field advisers. I was not even aware of their existence as actors in the literacy programs before arriving in Istanbul, but they proved to be key in the day-to-day operation of the programs. By accompanying me to research sites on the first day of my visits at each site, they added credibility and trust to the research endeavor in the eyes of the teachers and participants who openly stated so on more than one occasion. The field advisers set up each individual program site and serve as the liaison between AÇEV main offices, more specifically the Literacy and Women's Support Department, and all the partners in the field including volunteer teachers and organizations that offer the physical space for the program in the communities in Istanbul. AÇEV only has one laboratory center where they field-

test new program initiatives, and all the other programs are offered on the promises of partnering institutions: schools, state-run adult education centers, and spiritual centers. Even though there is much diversity in the shapes and sizes of the physical program sites (and host institutions), they are all institutions approved to offer educational programs to adults by the Ministry of Education, which sets a standard and some uniformity across programs. Nonetheless, field advisers manage a complex set of inter-organization relationships; they initiate and maintain relationships with other actors in the field in consultation with the main office and on the foundation of AÇEV's existing protocols with these institutions or the ministries in the government responsible for these institutions. They support the teachers on various issues, which sometimes include how best to support a participant outside of the classroom as well; they are central in AÇEV programs' potential influence on social support.

Based on my observations in the programs and interviews with all the participants to the study, field advisers are perceived as the face of AÇEV for participants and teachers who usually do not know the staff from the main offices. Depending on how experienced the teacher is, the field advisers do regular classroom visits and offer guidance and support on various topics including best teaching practices and how to manage the relationship with the host institution providing the class space. More relevant to the purposes of this research project, they offer advice to teachers how best to support students on non-academic issues as well. For example, if a student approaches the teacher with a personal problem that the teacher does not quite know how to handle, without exception all the teachers stated that they would contact the field adviser first before proceeding. In return, they contact the staff in the main offices if they are not sure what course of action to offer to the teacher in helping the student. I interviewed all four field advisers for the district of Istanbul.

Lastly, I interviewed 16 participants from the four programs and their volunteer teachers. At the Riverside classroom, *Nihan* was the volunteer teacher who had been teaching since 2005 with only a year stoppage due to an illness. She taught both FALP and ALAIP curricula over the years (she started with the FALP II program, which was later revised to become ALAIP and AÇEV trained her again before ALAIP was implemented). She had a high-school degree even though she gained entrance to university in Izmir in early 1980s. At that time, her two older brothers deemed the political situation of post-coup Turkey too volatile for her to attend university. She was in her mid-50s, married with two grown sons at the time of the interview.

I interviewed five women learners at Riverside. *Handan* was originally from Ethiopia. Her late husband was Turkish and she had been living in Istanbul since 2008. The AÇEV course functioned as a second language education program for her. She was attending embroidery and exercise classes at the center where the literacy program was also hosted. She had two college-age children who lived in the United States, and Handan was trying to join them there at the time of the interview. *Jale* was one of the younger women learners in her early 20s. She was living with her grandmother after her parents' divorce. She was tech-savvy (always carrying her tablet computer with her) and anticipated continuing her education upon completing the program. She was single and did not have a job, and hoped that having a basic education diploma would help her become more employable. *Kevser* lived in close proximity to the program site in Riverside. She was a widow in her 50s with two children (one adult and one teenager) living with her. She lived on her late husband's retirement pension and also received financial support from the local municipality. *Lila* had been living in Istanbul for the last 35 years. She had three adult children. She worked as a textile worker without social insurance while raising her children. She was in her late 50s and lived a few miles from the program site with her retired spouse, whom she

married at age 14. *Mavi* started with an embroidery course at the center while she was waiting for the AÇEV program to start. She was in her early 30s and married with no children. Her husband worked as a cook at a nearby restaurant.

The teacher for the Rainy Hill site, *Tezay*, had been with AÇEV for the last five years. She had a business degree from Bogazici University and worked as a financial comptroller for multi-national corporations in Istanbul for 20 years. She did not work anymore and spent her time volunteering for AÇEV and raising her teenage daughter with her husband, who still worked in the financial industry. *Oya* was in her mid-20s and had two small children. She was married at 13 years old as the second wife of a much older man still sharing the same household with the first wife who could not have children. She had been living in Istanbul for 12 years at the time of the interview. *Pelin* was in her early 20s and was *Oya*'s husband's sister. She was single and worked at a textile workshop at times, although she was unemployed at the time of the interview. She was the primary care provider for her sibling with disabilities, which kept her "as busy as a married woman." *Remziye* was in her 50s and had lived in Istanbul "for almost 40 years." Her husband drew a pension and still worked in construction. *Remziye* had worked at home raising five children and thus did not have retirement income, similar to all the other older women learners that I met. She was providing care for her grandchildren at the time of the interview. *Rana* was in her early 60s. Her husband and one of her two children died, which prompted her to start working. She stopped working upon retirement and lived on her pension. *Selin* was in her late 50s. Like some of the other women, her actual birthday was four years different from the official documents, since her family got it changed for her to be married before it was legal (the marrying age is currently 17 for women). She had 4 adult children (two living in Europe), but was the main person taking care of her husband suffering from cancer.

It was *Irmak's* first year as a teacher for AÇEV. He was the only male teacher who participated in the research and one of the few men teaching AÇEV's adult literacy courses in Istanbul. He was in his early 50s and had retired after working as a salesperson in the automotive industry. His first wife lived in the United States with their children and he traveled regularly to visit them. He had a college degree and intended to learn English by attending language courses whenever he was in the United States. *Gamze* has been living in Istanbul since 1991. She had two children. She first attended an adult literacy program in 2005. She had been attending adult literacy courses provided by AÇEV for the last three years together with Feray. She considered herself to be print-literate (which was in line with Irmak's evaluation). She was forced into marriage at 14 as the third wife of an older man and had to withstand domestic violence from her second husband, the father of her two children. She was 50 years old. *Feray* was in her early 60s and was friends with Gamze outside of the class as well. They had been attending the AÇEV programs together for three years. She had three children and depended her husband for retirement income, even though they worked together for decades running their small business, which involved manufacturing paper bags for grocery stores. I recently learned from Irmak that Gamze and Feray chose to repeat the ALAIP program the following year at a different site.

Elif at Smoky Valley was in her late 40s and she had been teaching at AÇEV for about seven months when I met her. She started with FALP and continued with ALAIP with nearly the same set of women learners. She was by far the most enthusiastic of the four teachers in pointing out how much she appreciated being able to work with the women in the programs. She had a daughter getting ready to start university, a younger son, and a spouse who she said was sincerely supportive of her teaching. *Ada* was 30 years old and had lived in Istanbul for two decades. She was single and lived with her family, which is common and socially expected for

both unmarried men and women. She had six siblings and also attended a Kuran course at the same time with AÇEV's literacy program. She was bilingual (Kurdish and Turkish) and code-switched to Kurdish while spending time with Bahar and Ceyda (two sisters in the same class). Bahar and Ceyda had been in the class for both FALP and ALAIP. *Bahar* was single and in her early 30s, and lived with her family, including Ceyda. She had lived in Istanbul since the early 2000s and did not work outside the home. *Ceyda* was in her mid-20s and worked in the textile industry since age 14. She quit her job to be able to attend the program. *Deniz* was in her mid-60s. She worked at a government institution and was retired at the time of the interview. She had three children and provided care for her grandchildren. She was married and reported that her husband supported her attendance in the program.

I have reported approximate ages for the women learners since they often were not sure of their exact date of birth. Three young women in Smoky Valley, Ada, Bahar and Ceyda, specifically mentioned a discrepancy between what was stated in their official birth records and what their parents told them. Bahar, for example, was given the birth certificate of an older sibling who died in infancy by her parents and as a result, she was much older in the official records. Their case illustrated how pervasive similar practices were even for the younger generations. It got even more complicated for older women: Besides not knowing their exact date of birth, their age was later changed in an attempt to make their marriages as children to older men legal.

In all, I interviewed and recorded 31 individuals for a total of 1608 minutes (26.8 hours). The observations comprised 45 hours inside the classes and 60 hours on the program sites, spending time before and after the classes and gathering data about institutions that were hosting the AÇEV programs. I also met the general manager, Nalan Yalcin, in Washington, DC while

she was there to accept an award from the Center for the Book within the Library of Congress (LOC) to receive “the international prize” since they have “made a significant and measurable contribution to increasing literacy levels” (Davis, 2014, p. 3). At the presentation they gave before accepting the \$50,000 award in the Thomas Jefferson Building of LOC in October of 2014, Durgunoglu and Yalcin reported that Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) reached 140,000 adults in 25 districts in Turkey.

Measures

Surveys of perceived and received support cannot be assumed to be equivalent cross-culturally, making simple translation insufficient (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010) to ensure vigor and quality in research. Harkness and Schoua-Glusberg (1998) contended that “translatory equivalence” is misleading because it fails to recognize that languages are not isomorphic, and a mechanic understanding of the translation process—what goes in (the source language text) can be completely matched by what comes out (the target language text)—does not recognize the complexity of languages and their inextricable ties to culture. Therefore, it was very important for me to find a survey instrument that is adapted to the Turkish setting. Adaptation involves certain methods during and after translation including but not limited to factor analysis to see if the factor structure of the new survey are comparable to the original (Gungor & Schied, 2008). After consulting with professors in the school of education, including the adult education program at Bogazici University in Istanbul, and conducting an extensive literature review, I decided to use the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988). MSPSS has been translated and adapted into Turkish by Eker and Arkar (1995). Using a sample comprising surgical patients, psychiatric patients and healthy adults, Eker and Arkar (1995) have shown that the Turkish version of MSPSS has good psychometric properties; the

factor structure of the MSPSS was stable cross-culturally, and it had good internal consistency. They found similar results in a subsequent studies (Eker, Arkar & Yaldiz, 2000, 2001). More importantly, the adapted version of MSPSS have been used in a variety of settings in Turkey including women with low SES in rural and urban settings (Altiparmak et al., 2012; Arkar et al., 2004; Ege, Timur, Zincir, Geçkil, & Sunar-Reeder, 2008; Filazoglu & Griva, 2008; Kusu et al., 2008, 2009; Yagmur & Oltuluoglu, 2011; Yagmur & Ulukoca, 2010). The use of the survey instrument helped me corroborate findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis, and it will enable me to compare my findings with those of others in Turkey and in the United States.

MSPSS aims to measure “the subjective assessment of social support adequacy” (Zimet et al., 1988, p. 32). The survey has three subscales, assessing perceptions of social support adequacy from three specific sources: family, friends, and significant other. MSPSS includes only 12 items, each subscale consisting of four items. Each item is a short statement such as “my family really tries to help me” or “I can talk about my problems with my friends.” The survey includes a 7-point Likert scale ranging from very strongly disagree (1) to very strongly agree (7) in response to the items, as such each item is scored 1-7. The scoring is usually done presenting means and standard deviations for each item, and then for each factor. It is a tool to be used in situations where time is limited to get a rough sense of people’s assessments of the support they receive from friends, family and partners.

The MSPSS played a crucial role in this study, which went beyond a quick assessment of perceived social support from significant others, friends, and family. After spending the first two weeks of the five-week fieldwork at the AÇEV main offices in Mecidiyekoy, I used the remaining three weeks administering the MSPSS, conducting observations and interviews, and

taking photographs at the four sites. Since I had a limited amount of time, it was necessary to establish trust and get to know the study participants as soon as possible. The field advisers proved to be essential in this process. I met the three field advisers, who accompanied me to the sites, for at least an hour before the initial visit to each site. I told them about the study and trained them to administer the survey. They were present when I explained the study to the participants, went through the IRB forms, asked the women learners who would be interested in participating in the study, and explained to them I wanted to administer a short survey on the same day. In some cases, the field adviser helped me administer the survey (they administered the survey on one side of the room while I was administering the survey on another side). To make sure that print literacy was not a barrier, we administered the survey with each participant by reading each item and asking for their response on the 7-point scale. All in all, 30 women agreed to take part in the survey and I interviewed 16 of them during my consequent visits. The survey made it possible to get to know the women learners and ask them if they would be interested in a recorded interview on the same topic, which required a much bigger commitment. Therefore, the survey administration took much longer than it would have if it had been administered the more conventional way; however, the extended time allowed me to get to know the participants and recruit a subset of them for the interviews.

Surveys are widely used because of their convenience and brevity; however, quantitative self-report measures are not the only means to study social support (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010). In fact, the remaining data sources for this study to explore perceived social support at AÇEV included interviews with those participating in the literacy course, volunteer teachers, staff members, and academic advisers as well as observations and analysis of foundation documents including curricular materials, and research reports. I also took still photos of classroom

activities and AÇEV facilities. I created the semi-structured interview forms for the participants, teachers, and professional AÇEV staff based on the review of literature and the goals of the study. The use of multiple qualitative data sources allowed a richer description of the phenomenon while the survey instrument was used as a triangulation method. The qualitative nature of this study also made it more suitable for “conceptual clarification and expansion” (Finfgeld-Connett, 2005, p. 4) of social support in the Turkish context. Qualitative interviews with key informants are especially useful since they work better in constructing perspectives on “culturally specific expressions and perceptions of support” (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010, p. 516).

Data Analysis

Due to the large amount of data collected on a small amount of time, Jeffrey and Troman (2004) recommend that the researcher start organizing observations and perspectives while on the site. As a result, data analysis started while still in the field, as I was organizing experiences, emerging perspectives, through a researcher’s diary to write and reflect on observational notes. Once I was back from Turkey, I got all interviews transcribed in Turkish and uploaded the transcriptions, digitized versions of curricular materials and still photographs into NVivo 10, qualitative data analysis software. As such, all data other than photographs were transformed into digital texts before the analysis could start.

The texts were analyzed using content analysis, defined as “subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). The analysis process was modelled after Graneheim and Lundman’s techniques (2004) in terms of concepts, procedures, and measures. Coding categories were derived directly from the text data, and as such the categories and themes were constructed (Charmaz, 2006) with an inductive approach. I complemented the inductive

process with three categories of social support that informed the formulation of the research as sensitizing concepts, namely emotional support, informational support, and instrumental support. I also paid attention to whether support perceived or enacted was action facilitating or nurturant.

The content analysis was complemented by some of the tools offered by Gee (2011) to identify salient discourses in the text on literacy, women, and social support. The content analysis provided the “the topics and themes” and made it possible to discuss the meaning of the texts in social, cultural, and political terms while paying close attention to the details of Turkish language structure (Gee, 2005, 2011). Being bilingual as a native speaker of Turkish and following the political and educational landscape meticulously, including policy and practice, were invaluable in being able to identify the prominent discourses (language-in-use) and Discourses within the text. Each Discourse incorporates a habitually taken for granted and implicit set of “theories” about what counts as a “normal” person and the “right” ways to think, feel, and behave. These theories crucially involve viewpoints on the distribution of “social goods,” who should and who should not have status, worth, and other material goods in society (Gee, 2008). The data was multimodal in that texts combined words and images; however, the main focus was on words rather than illustrations in the text mostly because they are pretty sparse in both FALP and ALAIP materials.

In the end, all of the data (including artifacts collected from AÇEV programs such as posters) were digitized to help with organization, categorization, and analysis of the data. As a result, although the data was collected from physical and virtual spaces, it was all digitized before the formal analysis could start. Still, the “field” was a useful abstraction that gave direction and shape to the research process.

Researcher Role

For the purposes of this research project, the issue of the distance of the research site is complicated by my “native ethnographer” status as a Turkish doctoral student going back to collect data in my country of birth and specifically in the city where I resided right before coming to United States. Yet, rather than the insider/outsider dichotomy, it is more helpful to frame my identity as a researcher as “shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations” (Narayan, 1993, p. 671). Narayan explained that a society is not homogenous, and as a result it is questionable that anyone can be an authentic insider in every social interaction imaginable. Furthermore, Narayan’s accounts of her experiences in the field as a “native ethnographer” illustrate that certain characteristics that the researcher is assumed to possess can be used and interpreted by people and institutions they encounter in ways that cannot always be foreseen during the research design. Depending on the situation, some of these interpretations can help or hinder the researcher’s attempts at reaching research goals.

Instead of highlighting my “native” status, I have depended on my relative communicative competence defined as “the ability to appropriately use and interpret speech varieties and discourse styles within home speech communities” to conduct this research (Jacobs-Huey, 2002, p. 799). I was raised as Turkish and Sunni Muslim (like the majority in Turkey) and as such, I am fluent in the discourses around both nationalism and Islam in Turkey, which are inextricably tied to modern Turkish identity (see Tapper, 1991; Yavuz, 2003). I am a native speaker of the Turkish language, specifically Istanbul and Sinop/Kastamonu regional dialects, and I have conducted research in adult literacy centers in Istanbul before. However, I do not speak Kurdish, the second most spoken language in Turkey, and my communicative competence would not, of course, cover all Turkish speech communities. Despite these

limitations, at the very least, I have not had to spend a significant part of my research time learning the local language as some anthropologists have to do to this day. While in the field in Istanbul, I had to negotiate different positionalities in the field due to my ethnic, linguistic, gendered, educational, and class backgrounds, as well as my degree of communicative competence in the specific speech community where I found myself (Jacob-Huey, 2002, p. 799).

Before leaving for data collection, I anticipated that even the fact that I would be a researcher from an American University may be a drawback, or an advantage based on Narayan's (1993) accounts of her experience as an ethnographer with a culturally tangled identity. I assumed that depending on the situation certain aspects of my life story, the fact that my mother had attended an adult literacy course recently and that I am originally from rural Turkey like many of the typical participants to literacy courses in Istanbul, or that I went to a very "prestigious" Turkish university before moving to the United States would be salient. I thought my gender would possibly be an issue with more conservative women in the programs as it was while conducting research in the poor suburbs of Istanbul in 2006. I intended to focus special attention to my experiences as a "native" scholar as a possible line for future research and writing. I suspected, however, that my contacts at Bogazici University, where all three of the founders of AÇEV worked at one time or another, the relationship with AÇEV staff members that I had been fostering for more than three years, and having access to many bilingual scholars of adult literacy and education would prove more useful for my research goals than a Turkish passport indicating my "native" ethnographer status during the fieldwork (see Gungor & Schied, 2008 for a discussion on the key role of competent translators in cross-cultural research conducted in Turkey). For example, I was able to discuss my analysis with local adult education

professors and professionals to add to ethnographic validity (Prins, 2006) during the data collection process.

However, despite focusing on my identity as a researcher and my relative competence in various speech communities, I was not able to foresee all the ways aspects of my biography would come up as a potential help or hindrance. Two significant examples come to mind. First, the fact that I was living in Pennsylvania led to a knowing smile on the faces of the field advisers, volunteer teachers, and even some of the participating women. It has been nearly a decade since I moved to Pennsylvania from Istanbul, and while I was planning for the research trip, the only reason the state where I had been living the better part of the last decade had been relevant at all was whenever my family were trying to figure out if I had been affected by whatever disaster was being reported on Turkish television as happening in *Amerika*. However, the recent political fight between then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the influential religious cleric of the Hizmet movement Fethullah Gulen living in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania meant that everyone that I interacted with knew of the name of the state. Worse yet, they often assumed that since I was inhabiting the same state with Mr. Gulen, I was likely to be one of his ardent followers, some of whom had been described as enemy number one by Mr. Erdogan during the run up to the election, which preceded my trip to Istanbul by a few months. In fact, Pennsylvania was described as the capital of the “parallel state,” the supposed deep government organization in the media, the judiciary, and the police that is following the bidding of the leaders of the Hizmet movement, and specifically Mr. Gulen. At the beginning, I was amused by the inquiries of the people I was interacting with regarding Mr. Gulen. However, I realized very quickly that whether some of the key people, for example one of the field advisers I interviewed, would trust me or not depended on convincing them that I was not affiliated with the Hizmet

movement. While doing an interview at a café on the shore of the Marmara Sea after a classroom observation, she directly asked me about my involvement with the Hizmet Movement and wanted to know how I was paying for my education when I told her I was not on a Turkish government scholarship, the assumption being that I was most likely supported financially for my degree by this community. After a few similarly tense exchanges, I started to shorten the name of the school that I was attending as Penn State, hoping that living in *Pensilvanya* would not be a deterrent to the way people responded to me especially when I first met them. During the whole research process, this became something that I paid much more attention than I had expected while getting ready in the United States. While in Turkey, I was able to understand the subtext in the question “Did you go to Pennsylvania on a scholarship?” very quickly, not because I was carrying a Turkish passport but because I was following the Turkish media closely before my trip to Turkey.

There was undoubtedly a blurring of lines in terms where “the field” exactly was since I was paying much more attention to what was happening in Turkey during the months running up to my trip to Turkey, and I continued to talk to Turkish scholars back in Pennsylvania while I was trying to make sense of what I heard and observed during the data collection process in Istanbul. For example, I met tenured faculty from Turkey as visiting professors who were earnestly nervous about their grant application to *Turkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Arastırma Kurumu* (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) since they were, for the time being, living in Pennsylvania. A Turkish student who was awarded a scholarship to get his Ph.D. in the United States in adult education field recently contacted me to inquire about schools he should apply for a doctoral degree, and when I suggested that he should definitely consider Penn State, he told me that he would be worried about the implications of choosing a school in

Pennsylvania. These more recent experiences were congruent with my observations about the current connotations of the word Pennsylvania in Turkey. All that being said, my personal life has gotten a little bit easier since there is no confusion about where I live for my family now in case of a natural disaster, and this has curbed the number of frantic phone calls that I receive.

Another issue I had not anticipated was that I would be collecting data in an Alevi spiritual center *cemevi*; one of the AÇEV programs were offered in the classrooms that this community provided. “Alevi” is a blanket term in Turkey for a large number of heterodox communities with significantly varying beliefs and ritual practices (van Bruinessen, 1996), and although it is beyond to scope of this paper to draw a more complete picture here, suffice it to say that they are distinct from various Sunni communities in the country. Some Alevis consider their faith to be a subset of Islam while others argue that it is a different faith altogether. I was told by the Alevi Dede—not a name but a title, one of the spiritual leaders in the community belonging to a hereditary priestly caste (van Bruinessen, 1996, p. 7)—that despite being a large part of the Turkish society and living in lands that comprise modern-day Turkey for centuries, Alevis have been on the margins of political power in Turkey especially under the rule of Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party, cadres, and supporters of which are often from the Sunni majority in Turkey. He illustrated his argument with *cemevi* not being recognized as a legitimate place of worship (and as a result, not receiving any state subsidies and protections) and none of the appointed governors of the 81 districts being Alevi although there are millions of Alevis living in every region of Turkey. Not all of the participating women were Alevi in this center and neither was the volunteer teacher that I interviewed for the study. However, participating women who were part of the religious community made sure to tell me that they

hoped my research would help dispel some of the misconceptions and outright hate speech against Alevis.

In order to better understand this religious community as a host of a AÇEV program, I spent the whole day there every week after I was done with the observations and the interviews; I was given a personalized tour of the center by the manager of the center and some of the community members, and I even attended a funeral held there. We had lunch provided by the loved ones of the deceased in a small kitchen with the manager of the center, members of the community as well as one of the Alevi Dedes, providing me with the opportunity to learn about educational activities of the center. Despite living in Turkey for decades, I had never been to a *cemevi* before, and I tried and learned as much as possible about the rituals and rhythms of the center to better understand the role it played in the way social support is perceived and enacted. Alevi women who agreed to be a part of the study talked about *cemevi* as an essential space in the way they experienced and perceived social support or lack thereof in the Hillside neighborhood (a pseudonym) where the *cemevi* looms large. None of this is to imply that somehow the members of the Alevi community were more mysterious to me, or that I was made to feel any differently at this setting than the other three secular spaces that I visited. Rather, even before traveling to Turkey, I realized that my identity as a researcher was more complicated than being Turkish, and this complication had some consequences in terms of getting access, forming relationships, and establishing trust.

The research process is a 24/7 endeavor while collecting data using ethnographic approach, especially in the compressed time mode (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004), and as such I never knew where or when I was going to learn a bit more about my research questions. After a night of writing up observation notes, organizing interview recording files, and trying anxiously to

back them up on multiple hard-drives, I grabbed a late-night dinner with an old friend at a *meyhane* (Turkish counterpart to a pub) in Topagacı, only a few miles from AÇEV's main offices. Sitting by the vast fireplace where skewers of kebabs were being cooked, my friend and I were talking about what brought me back to Istanbul for a significant amount of time after all these years. As soon as I mentioned Mother Child Education Foundation, the friendly but until then quiet Murat sitting a couple of feet from us by the lines of spicy meat asked if I knew Ayse Ozyegin. I said I knew who she was although I never met her in person (one of the founders, and the main private funder of AÇEV with her husband Husnu Ozyegin), and that I was surprised that he knew who she was since she is far from a household name. Despite AÇEV's ubiquitous media presence especially while embarking on a new project or collaboration, the Ozyegins seem to have preferred academics and professionals act as the public face of the NGO. He told me that his father was close friends with the owners of Stad Han in Mecidiyeköy, and as such landlords to AÇEV and Finansbank (one of the biggest financial institutions in the country once owned by Mr. Ozyegin) as well as many other offices. I had assumed that because AÇEV was sharing the same building with Finansbank since the days I was living in Mecidiyeköy fresh out of college, the building must be owned by them through a donation, or at least they would use it free of charge. This, of course, is no earth shattering revelation in terms of the purposes of this project, however when I told this anecdote to one of the assistants to general manager, Hilal Kuscul, during our interview, it directed the conversation to the role that the Ozyegins played in the NGO over the years, and helped me ask questions that I would not have thought to ask otherwise. Besides, it exemplified some of the issues that I have discussed in this chapter. Being able to move through Turkish society with ease, for the most part, and perform some of the social rituals when necessary helped me form relationships and establish rapport. It also was a reminder not to

act and draw conclusions based on assumptions and to tirelessly ask questions whenever and wherever possible, and engage in categorization, organization, and even analysis of the data collected, and make decisions about how best to spend remaining precious time in the field based on this analysis.

A valid question would be if and why any of this matters at all. After all, all educational research is done by people, and social situations are always messy and unpredictable. However, claiming to employ ethnographic tools requires one to acknowledge the central role that the researcher takes in the whole research process as the main instrument (Wolcott, 1980) and to describe this “instrument” in more detail than it is customary in other educational research traditions so as to help the readers make an informed judgment about the quality of the arguments.

Data Quality and Trustworthiness

Ethnographers employing both quantitative (e.g., surveys) and qualitative data collection methods are a typical example of a pragmatist approach to research (Creswell, 2007). For the purposes of this project, most of the data collection methods were qualitative in nature including interviews, observations, field notes, a researcher’s diary, and analysis of program documents as well as interpretation of still photographs that I have taken at the research sites. I have also used a survey instrument, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Eker & Arkar, 1995; Zimet et al., 1988) to triangulate the aforementioned data collection methods combining qualitative data with quantitative data. Comparing different sources of data is to check the reliability of the data (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) and look for “convergence, corroboration and correspondence of results” across data sources (Greene et al., 1989, p. 259). In fact, triangulation of data sources, methods, researcher perspectives, and even theoretical

frameworks is common in ethnography (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Various ways of triangulation are one of the strengths of ethnography as a research tradition, and it is one of the primary reasons why I have chosen to situate this research in the ethnographic framework. The use of different data sources in this project contributed to the quality and richness of my descriptions and analysis in the following chapters.

This research was monitored in the United States by educational researchers who are not well-versed in the characteristics of the adult literacy education landscape in Turkey and who do not speak Turkish. To have my interpretations of the data challenged within the Turkish educational context, I have been in touch with two former mentors from Bogazici University who are both faculty members in the adult education program in Istanbul. They helped me before, during and after the data collection (e.g., accessing documents and research published in Turkish, deciding on a survey instrument, providing suggestions on research procedures). Furthermore, I interviewed them at the end of the data collection process while I was still in Turkey. I shared with them emerging perspectives and directions based on initial organization of field notes, interview recordings, survey results, and photographs. I asked them about the viability of the points of view I was constructing on scientific linkages and the role of NGOs in Turkish adult education system and their feedback helped me refine my arguments.

I have used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for research quality for naturalistic inquirers. They argued that a concern with credibility should replace truth value and "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" is through "member checks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). I was not able to do member checks with any of the women learners since the research procedures did not ask them for permission to contact them again upon completion of the research in Turkey. I was hesitant to add this to the procedures since it could be interpreted as

inappropriate for me to ask them their personal contact information based on gender norms and expectations. However, I told volunteer teachers, field advisers, and staff from the main offices that I would contact them again to check narrative accuracy and their views on my interpretations.

While writing the dissertation, I was able to reach one of the four field advisers, two of the four teachers, all three members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department, and the assistant to general manager via phone calls, video conferencing and e-mails. I presented my findings to two members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department from the main offices and the academic adviser for adult literacy programs using video conferencing. I also sent a written report with the initial findings to the main offices and the academic adviser. Their responses were varied, yet the most common theme was that even though they were not there to witness what I was reporting on all occasions, what I conveyed in the narrative was congruent with their prior experiences at AÇEV literacy classrooms. As such, I have established trustworthiness in the accuracy of the narrative presented here. There can certainly be other interpretations of the data. My goal was to include enough detail in this dissertation so that other researchers and practitioners can evaluate my interpretations and come to their own conclusions based on what is presented.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the research methods employed to answer the research questions and reach research goals. It started with ethnographic approaches that shaped the research process taking issues of time, travel, and fieldwork into account. Then, the research design was laid out: research sites, sampling of the participants, and strategies and procedures for data collection and analysis. I also discussed my role as a researcher comparing expectations to

experiences in the field. I will end the discussion on the methods with some concluding thoughts on ethnography. Beyond helping pinpoint culturally specific expressions and perceptions of support (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010), ethnography can become a way to humanize *the other* even in contexts where it has not been possible for other disciplines to do so. At its best, it is supposed to make “the familiar strange, the exotic quotidian” (Clifford, 1986, p. 2). For instance, in his very influential book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (2003) argued that anthropology of Clifford Geertz, whose interest in Islam was “discrete and concrete enough to be animated by the specific societies and problems he studies and not by the rituals, preconceptions, and doctrines of Orientalism” (p. 326) was an excellent example of a researcher who did not have an imperialist or colonialist model of scholarship. Said’s take on Geertz work on Islam (see Geertz, 1971 for a sample of this work) is a very helpful tip for any ethnographer trying to stay away from some of the darker elements of ethnography’s past in essentializing cultures and people studied. It also is a testament to the significance of having “discrete and concrete enough” research goals and questions.

Rorty (1989) considered ethnographies along with the novel as means to learn about people that are different from us: “This process of coming to see other human beings as ‘one of us’ rather than as ‘them’ is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and of redescription of what we ourselves are like” (p. xvi). In answering the research questions through this ethnographic research, I do not necessarily intend to provide generalizable conclusions about the consequences of participating in a literacy program in Turkey in terms of social support (see Prins, 2010 for a similar approach), yet I hope this work will shed light into local literacy practices, and provide a “detailed description” of formerly unfamiliar people, and institutions.

Chapter 4

Global Norm Making and Functional Literacy

How do actors in positions of influence at an educational institution make decisions about the way programs are designed, implemented, and assessed? There is often, especially in the United States, emphasis on the decisions at every stage being informed by research. However, even if such stated adherence to this principle were representative of practice, this still does not illuminate how certain research is preferred over others. Educational research can be, and often is, contradictory, and figuring out how to draw a pragmatic roadmap to create an educational program from myriad published research with varying methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and populations can be a daunting task even for seasoned researchers and practitioners.

These decisions are made every day across the globe, however, and the analysis of the empirical data collected for this study in the United States and Turkey reveal that in our highly connected world, they influence and are influenced by each other in complex ways, yet some of these influences can be traced with an historical analysis to illustrate the temporal and spatial movement of educational theory. I use the verb “move” loosely here since the data in this research is more congruent with a dynamic and dialectical process that refracts or produces educational phenomena “within social, political, and economic asymmetries between differentiated persons and their differentiated worlds” (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014, p. 378). Simply put, educational theory is made and remade in new spaces, rather than merely passing from one country to another, by a network of governmental and non-governmental organizations, people, and other supranational and national actors with differing levels of power and influence.

Engagement, Transmission, and Transformation

Functional Literacy as an approach to designing adult literacy programs was developed elsewhere (Levine, 1982), and AÇEV's use of it in the last two decades in Turkey illustrates how educational theory is reinterpreted in a new setting. Instead of using a framework that is solely built on transfer and borrowing across national borders, this analysis will highlight the connections and the mesh of relationships among different actors. Such an approach will allow me to account for socio-political, socio-historical, and socio-economic contexts while also acknowledging that local contexts are not isolated from global forces and influences. The main focus of this research is on the perceived social support among women participating in adult literacy courses offered by an NGO in Istanbul Turkey. However, the data collected in Istanbul, and in the United States through telephone and video interviews, as well as observations in Washington DC where AÇEV was awarded by the Library of Congress for their adult literacy programs in the fall of 2014, suggest that this work also has implications for comparative and international research on adult literacy.

Although this research's initial focus was solely on social support in the adult literacy classroom, spatial and temporal reproduction of educational theory became more central for a few reasons. First, my enrollment in a dual-degree program at Penn State encouraged me always to look at *adult education* research with a *comparative and international education* perspective. This illustrates the power of academic institutions and various explicit and latent expectations and guidelines within departments and programs in setting up a research agenda. Parallel to my experience, AÇEV's evolving adult literacy programs were also shaped by academic institutions and their characteristics. Interviews with Aydin Durgunoglu, the academic who initially designed the Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) with Banu Oney, indicate that universities have

played a determining role establishing and maintaining relationships between adult literacy researchers and practitioners at AÇEV as well.

Second, as a foreign-born researcher living in the United States and planning to teach both in the United States and in Turkey, I have always been interested in the role of educational researchers in how educational theory is reinterpreted in different contexts across time and space. While receiving my BA in foreign language education in Istanbul, there were times when I observed faculty clinging to theoretical frameworks that were mainstream while they were doing their doctoral work in the United States decades ago, and they continued to teach these theories in Turkey seemingly ignoring paradigm shifts in the literature in North America. For example, there was a well-respected professor teaching Benjamin S. Bloom's taxonomy as cutting-edge perspective on instructional design and evaluation. Even though this observation can be interpreted in various ways (perhaps many American scholars also hold onto perspectives they were taught as doctoral students), it exemplified the role that individual researchers can play in reproducing educational theory in new contexts. I am aware that this much reflexivity in terms of explaining the thought processes behind research decisions will lead to a less authoritarian text, but I hope it will show that I have paid a greater attention to contextualization (Bellier, 2005) as a novice researcher.

Most significantly, from the very beginning I was perplexed by the way functional literacy was defined by AÇEV in their published research in refereed journals; it did not match conventional conceptualizations of functional literacy at all, and it seemed to incorporate aspects from various other approaches including those informed by Paulo Freire and New Literacy Studies. Functional literacy originated in the United States and Britain during World War II, was made popular by a UNESCO report (Levine, 1982), and somehow found its way into AÇEV's

approach to literacy (Kagıtcıbası, Goksen, & Gulgoz, 2005) in a distinct form. The way literacy is conceptualized shapes the substance and style of educational programs (Scribner, 1984), and the results of this study indicate that the way educational programs are set up, in return, influences how social support is perceived in the classroom. Thus, better understanding how and why AÇEV has chosen to frame their literacy programs in the functional literacy tradition would help explain curricular and instructional decisions and their potential influence on perceived social support in literacy classroom.

To illustrate this last point, imagine a classroom where literacy is conceptualized as a cognitive skill that can be taught through drills and repetition, and the goal of the program is to help students get a primary school diploma. The classroom is set up so that the teacher spends most of the time in front of the board moving from activity to activity following a literacy primer. Imagine, also, that the participants have no prior relationship with their peers, and there is no time or physical space for the adult students to socialize during and after the classes since learning is not considered to be a social process. It is presumed that the only reason the participants are attending is to pass a test that will enable them to receive a degree equivalent to four years of basic education. In such a classroom, the students would likely report fewer interactions with the teacher and other fellow participants inside and outside the classroom, which in turn would diminish the prospect that they will be able to form relationships that will foster a sense of perceived social support. Although real-world classrooms are much more complex, this imagined classroom does imply a possible relationship between educational design and perceived social support, and the findings of this research are in line with such a connection. The two following chapters will expand on how AÇEV's adult literacy curriculum and instruction based on functional literacy have repercussions for perceived social support inside the

classroom. This chapter will, instead, explain AÇEV's distinctive way of describing functional literacy and how it is a useful example to study the way educational theory is reproduced and implemented within new contexts.

Scientific Linkages

Transnational professional networks. Before traveling to Turkey to collect the bulk of the data, I had used a theoretical framework based on “scientific linkages” (Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008) to make sense of the idiosyncratic use of Functional Literacy in journal articles published by AÇEV-affiliated academics (Durgunoglu & Kuscul, 2008; Durgunoglu, Oney, & Kuscul, 2003; Kagıtcıbası, Goksen, & Gulgoz, 2005). Even though the data collected during the fieldwork in Istanbul could not be explained satisfactorily with this perspective alone, it is still useful to provide the reader with the background on AÇEV's connections to the global educational institutions, especially in Europe and North America. The history of social, economic, and educational connections between Turkey and the United States is long, and it includes John Dewey's famous visit to Turkey when the modern Turkish educational system was being constructed (Gungor & Schied, 2010). Dewey's visit is especially telling since the local Turkish bureaucrats used Dewey's recommendations to pursue and legitimize their own agendas (Ata, 2000), foreshadowing the upcoming discussion on the asymmetries of power among different actors in reproducing educational theory in a new setting.

Turkish-European relationships are both deeper and longer. Since the start of accession talks on October 3, 2005, Turkey has been an official candidate negotiating to be a full member of the European Union (EU; Demirkol, 2013). Under the Customs Union established in 1995, Turkey was able to access the EU budget resources and the EU's credit and grants. However, since 2007, Turkey, along with all the candidate countries for EU accession, has been a

beneficiary of the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in accordance with the European Union Council Regulation (Duran, 2014) making more grants available to state and non-state actors, including NGOs such as AÇEV. Soydan and Abali (2014) argued that EU funds contributed to education's redefinition as a commodity and decreased state existence in education more in conformity with the market principles; however, as I will describe further, an EU grant that AÇEV received in 2005 to study gender issues significantly influenced the adult literacy curriculum and programs. The findings of the study shaped the curriculum, emphasizing the mechanisms involved in systemic discrimination against women in Turkey. As such, it is not easy to ascertain the long-term influence of these funds, including the implications of increased mobility and interaction between Turkish and European peoples thanks to programs such as Erasmus (Demirkol, 2013).

Social, economic, and educational connections between Turkey and the United States also include institutions like Bogazici University (BU) where all the founders of AÇEV have worked as tenured faculty at one time or another. BU, the very first American College outside of the United States, used to be called Robert College and was directed by an American board until 1973. It still employs many faculty members with doctoral degrees earned in the United States. Many current academic advisers and two of the three founders of AÇEV, Kagitcibasi and Sunar, have doctoral degrees from the United States. Borrowing from Jonkers and Tijssen (2008), the "scientific linkages," defined as the transnational professional networks that researchers form after receiving a degree from a country different than their country of birth and retained professional connections with their co-workers and supervisors in the former host country, can partially explain how functional literacy found its way in AÇEV's approach to literacy.

Kagıtcıbaşı and Sunar met at Berkeley in late 1960s before moving to Istanbul to work as faculty members at Bogazici University (Sunar, 2009), and they started AÇEV in 1993 based on a research project (1982-1986) on “the impact of an optimal combination of educational preschool care and home intervention” (Kagıtcıbaşı, Sunar, & Bekman, 1988, p. 1). They conducted the research with another Turkish academic, Sevda Bekman, who has a Ph.D. from University of London. As it turns out, all three founders of AÇEV received their doctoral degrees in the United Kingdom and United States at a time when functional literacy was a very popular way of talking about adult literacy education. These are also the two countries where functional literacy discourse has originated (Levine, 1982). All three founders are currently listed as advisers to AÇEV on their website. All three publish book chapters, books, and articles in academic journals in English based on their continuing research at AÇEV or reflections on former research (see Bekman & Aksu-Koc, 2009; Kagıtcıbaşı, 2012; Kagıtcıbaşı, Sunar, Bekman, Baydar, & Cemalcılar, 2009 for some recent examples). Furthermore, Hilal Kuscul, the assistant to the general manager at AÇEV, and Meltem Canturk, the director of the Literacy and Women’s Support Department, confirmed that Kagıtcıbaşı and Bekman still help shape AÇEV’s vision, and their opinions are sought when the literacy team is thinking about significant changes (e.g., the demographic changes in Turkey in terms of literacy levels and its potential effects on AÇEV’s programs). Meltem Canturk emphasized that Kagıtcıbaşı and Bekman would know about the “major developments for adult literacy programs as well as major challenges.” She feels that she can reach out to them to consult on issues around adult literacy programs, and there are regular meetings where they are briefed on the progress of various programs offered by AÇEV including adult literacy. According to Meltem Canturk, after taking some time off from being one of the academic advisers, Sunar has recently been assuming a more active role.

However, Sunar seems to have had less engagement with the NGO since its foundation compared to Kagıtcıbası and Bekman, saying “technically, I am not one of the founders of AÇEV, although I was one of the researchers on the project that gave AÇEV its start, and I have worked with ACEV over the years (and continue to do so)” (D. Sunar, personal communication, October 5, 2013).

Furthermore, staff from AÇEV headquarters frequently collaborate with AÇEV-affiliated academic advisers with connections to American universities (Durgunođlu, Oney, & Kuşcul, 2003; Durgunođlu, & Kuşcul, 2008). There are unaffiliated academics publishing in English based on research conducted at AÇEV-sponsored early childhood programs. Their research presumably informs AÇEV’s programs as well (for example, Buyuktaskapu & Samur, 2009). Hence, it seems that AÇEV is still connected to academic circles in the United States and Europe, and these connections are active and productive.

Some of the prominent advisers to AÇEV, including Durgunoglu hold tenured faculty positions in universities in the United States sustaining the scientific linkages (Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008) between Turkey and the United States. Bearing in mind that Turkey, along with Greece, exhibits the strongest tendencies for domestic rather than international co-publication activities among academics compared to other EU countries (Hoekman, Frenken, Tijssen, 2010), such scientific connections between the United States and Turkey are noteworthy. In the last decade, there has been significantly more collaborative research between Turkish scholars and their OECD counterparts (Choi, 2011), partially because the Council of Higher Education (the central overseeing authority over all higher education institutions as described by the 1982 constitution in Turkey) changed tenure requirements for assistant professors in 2001. Based on the increased state spending for research activities in Turkey and the state’s relative place as the primary

funder of research projects compared to other OECD countries, Choi (2011) argued that the Turkish government played a crucial role in the growing presence of the country in the international co-authorship network in the last 15 years, demonstrating the principal role of The Council of Higher Education in determining higher education policy.

Furthermore, the Technological and Scientific Research Council of Turkey provides cash incentives for published refereed articles in journals indexed by certain citation indices, encouraging faculty to collaborate and publish with international academics. In fact, they almost doubled the amount of monetary support for individual papers published in journals covered by citation indices in 2013 (up to 7500 TL or \$3000 per paper). There is criticism of the substantial use of bibliometric measures (i.e., journal impact factors, indices) for assessment of academic performance, tenure, and publication support in Turkey (Tonta, 2014), however the increased amount of collaboration in the form of co-publications cannot be ignored; it is likely that the incentives to publish in international journals is encouraging the faculty to seek new connections. The social, political, and economic context was markedly different when the founders of AÇEV conducted their research between 1982 and 1986 (Kagıtcıbaşı, Sunar, & Bekman, 1988) right after the coup d'état of 1980 that isolated Turkey economically and politically for the better part of the decade (Dagi, 1996). Therefore, one of the drawbacks with only focusing on “scientific linkages” is that these connections are embedded within a host of national and supranational actors and networks, and as Turkey has become more integrated in the social and economic spheres with the rest of the world since AÇEV’s founding, their capacity to effect change has also shifted.

Other notable connections. AÇEV’s connections are not limited to the Western academic world. They also cooperate with many multi-national and national corporations that

support their programs (see Balaban, Cicioglu, & Okutan, 2012 for some of AÇEV's recent partnerships and Bicakci, 2012 for a critique of some of these relationships between NGOs and the private corporations in Turkey). AÇEV has collaborated with the Ministry of National Education (MONE) for the better part of the last two decades; this is significant because MONE has vast power in shaping the design and implementation of adult literacy programs (Nohl & Sayilan, 2004; Sayilan & Yildiz, 2009). AÇEV has protocols with other ministries as well, but as assistant to the general manager Hilal Kuscul suggested, the one with MONE is the most significant for adult literacy education in terms of increasing access to AÇEV's programs.

There is evidence, however, that the relationship is contested and is frustrating for AÇEV administrators. Sirin (2009) explored the extent of NGOs' participation in educational decision-making in Turkey at the national level using semi-structured interviews with administrators of 14 NGOs, including those of AÇEV. He reports that NGOs are seeking active participation in educational decision-making processes, but their participation level is not up to their expectations. For example, the administrators from AÇEV argued that even though Ministry of National Education and the State Planning Organization (the current Ministry of Development) invite them to their policy workshops, the resulting policy decisions do not reflect AÇEV's perspectives to the extent desired.

Despite this, during fieldwork, I observed that there is considerable interaction between MONE and AÇEV. One of the high-ranking officials from the Ministry visited the Mecidiyekoy offices while I was there, and the preparations for the logistics of the visit illustrated how much AÇEV cared for this partnership. Furthermore, one of the members of the adult literacy and women's support team, Hilal Gencay, was in consultation with the Ministry officials about the

possible transfer of the online literacy portal to MONE; in fact, she was working on a memorandum of understanding right before our interview.

The online literacy portal, AÇEV'de Oku Yaz (Read and Write at AÇEV), would likely reach more people if it was operated by the ministry. Reaching out to as many women as possible seems to be the principle behind AÇEV's desire to continue this protocol. For instance, programs at MONE K-12 schools are only possible due to this protocol. It forms the basis for the field advisers of AÇEV to initiate and maintain relationships with school administrators. One of the four field advisers in Istanbul, Suna Aslan, stressed the role of the protocol while also acknowledging that many school principals are unaware of the collaboration, and this does slow things down while trying to open a course in a new community using MONE's infrastructure. Despite setbacks and false starts, the protocol supplies the legal framework and prescribes the roles and responsibilities for all the stakeholders, which includes educational institutions of various shapes and sizes—ranging from Koran courses to primary schools—all under the auspices of MONE.

Additionally, MONE's support legitimizes AÇEV's standing as a provider of adult literacy programs to the masses. Field advisers and volunteer teachers reported that some participants do not necessarily make a distinction between MONE and AÇEV; since the programs are offered at a school or people's education center, they assume that the state is the provider. This was also evident in participants' response when asked about their former participation in AÇEV literacy courses; they may have attended a literacy course, but they were not sure who provided the materials and instruction. Only through follow-up questions about the specifics of the curriculum was it possible to determine where they attended the program.

The AÇEV administrators also lamented that there was not enough collaboration among NGOs working in literacy in Turkey to form a powerful enough coalition to change literacy policies (Sirin, 2009). They recounted their attempts to form alliances and gather support from different sectors of the Turkish society including the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD, as it is known in Turkey), various fashion houses in Istanbul, artists, and famous athletes. They also lobbied the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the unicameral Turkish legislature. However, AÇEV's efforts did not include "radical" means such as mobilizing the community to organize public demonstrations, and they differed from labor unions, and more politically minded NGOs in this regard. Sirin's (2009) findings are only partially congruent with the way literacy is conceptualized by AÇEV as inherently functional. The NGO may not be organizing protests and sit-ins; however, their version of functional literacy does not accept the social and economic structures as the natural order, particularly in terms of gender norms. AÇEV's desire not to be seen as radical is more related to their desire of continuing to cultivate relationships with the business sector and refraining from activities that may damage their relationship with MONE. Furthermore, Sirin (2009) missed the mark on the collaboration between AÇEV and other NGOs in Turkey, taking AÇEV administrators' lament at face value. Such collaborations seems to have helped AÇEV content creators (e.g., Aydin Durgunoglu) to be able to create materials on issues that they are not well-versed in, such as emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of children; domestic violence; citizenship rights; and increased political participation of women.

Their programs are, in fact, deeply political in terms of providing women with information and helping them develop self-efficacy on issues affecting their lives, and the political perspective is influenced by other organizations, including NGOs working on women's

issues. Members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department in Mecidiyekoy, field advisers, and a couple of the teachers stressed that many principles that may not be deemed inherently political or radical among the educated urban elite may be evaluated as such in a certain community.

One salient example was mentioned multiple times. Despite the secular and relatively gender-egalitarian nature of family law in Turkey (Htun & Weldon, 2011; Ilkkaracan, 2012), some families force women to take less from the inheritance through informal negotiations, with the assumption that it is the men who are expected to take care of parents in old age. The Functional Adult Literacy Program student book (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2013) has a reading passage that encourages women to claim their right to inheritance, stating, "it is your, your children's and your family's future" (p. 79), and the teachers' manual (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012) has a lengthy informative section to inform classroom discussion. There has been, however, reported resistance to this perspective among stakeholders, such as local MONE officials indicating differing normative frameworks in how family affairs should be conducted. Hilal Kuscul, who has been at AÇEV since its foundation, remembered that a local MONE official disagreed with AÇEV's curriculum's stance on women's right to their parent's inheritance. He argued that he was expected to take care of his parents, not his brothers-in-law, so it was not fair for his sisters to inherit an equal part of the family wealth.

Besides, the curriculum and the discussions in the classroom encourage women to come together and petition to various local and state-level offices when their inherent rights stemming from being human and Turkish citizens are violated. That said, there is certainly as much focus on individuality as there is on solidarity. However, this should be evaluated in the Turkish context where women are primarily defined as a member of a certain social group organized

around family, religion, and place/region of birth (for immigrant women) rather than as an individual person. Women I talked to in the programs often referred to their identity in relation to family and region of birth (e.g., I am a mother to three kids, I am from the Black Sea). AÇEV curriculum and instruction are based on the assumption that for women to gain a better position in the society, they first need to appreciate their individual rights and responsibilities. As a result, to describe AÇEV curriculum as individualistic and apolitical would not be correct in the way that these terms are understood in the United States, for example.

When members of the literacy and women's support team and field advisers argue that they are not political, what they seem to mean is that they do not support a political party or engage in political polemics through the media. For example, they try to discourage volunteer teachers from bringing newspaper articles to be read in the classroom that would be perceived as supporting a certain political party's position according to Mutlu Yasa. Meltem Canturk acknowledged that education is inherently political, but it is distinct from participating in partisan politics. To foreshadow some of the following discussion, key people—including one of the assistants to the general manager at AÇEV—emphasized that their programs and initiatives are shaped by research, and that the NGO has used this argument to shield itself from any charges of political motivation in deciding the content of their programs. Meltem Canturk underscored that she could defend any aspect of the curriculum in terms of research evidence. However, political issues are brought up and discussed in the classroom as they relate to women's issues, discrimination, and safety of children as I observed in classroom discussions. AÇEV, at least the Literacy and Women's Support Department, plays a delicate balancing act where they try to push the rights of women, children and discriminated groups through their curriculum, while at the same time working with actors who are much more conservative or

progressive (in terms of more directly advocating for political change on the streets) than themselves.

These links, however, do not fully explain why AÇEV has continued to frame its literacy program in the functional literacy tradition. Scientific or other linkages are only meaningful if they are a part of a larger explanatory framework that specifies its role in the way educational theory is adapted and implemented in new settings. For example, considering the number of connections between AÇEV and international academic institutions, refereed publications, and conferences, it is unexpected that AÇEV has continued to use the Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) as a way to introduce their initiatives at international events despite a sea change in the way functional literacy is discussed in the literature.

The interviews with AÇEV center staff, field advisers, and academic advisers suggest that even though there are slight changes of emphasis among them, there is a consensus about what they believe functional literacy is, and it is congruent with the definition that is provided in one of their published articles.

Functional literacy is not just a skill or knowledge, and its acquisition encompasses more than learning a number of technical skills. Being functionally literate is more than simply decoding script, or producing essays; it is also taking on the identities associated with these practices. Functional literacy is an emancipatory practice that requires people to read, speak, and understand a language. In this sense, functional literacy is a competence that goes beyond grammar and semantics rooted in everyday exchanges. Such conceptualization emphasizes the linkages between reading, writing, culture, economy and political system. (Kagıtcıbaşı, Gökse, & Gulgoz, 2005, pp. 472-473)

AÇEV has modified the definition of functional literacy approach so much that, I argue, it would not be considered to have internal consistency by many literacy academics and professionals in the United States. It seems to encompass aspects of critical literacy, functional literacy, and even literacy as social practice, and some of the basic assumptions behind these approaches are incompatible.

I argue that global norm making (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014; Stambach, Raby, & Cappy, 2011) offers a better framework to understand how AÇEV has transformed what functional literacy has meant over the years. Next, I will solve the puzzle of the seeming movement of ideas and theories regarding approaches to adult literacy education aiming to clarify the confusion that stems from AÇEV's distinctive use of functional literacy to define their programs using "global norm making as a lens" (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014, p. 377). The following discussion is mainly based on interviews with the advising academic to adult literacy programs, Aydin Durgunoglu, and members of the Literacy and Women's Support team at AÇEV including the assistant to the general manager Hilal Kuscul as the data source.

Global Norm Making

I visited AÇEV in May 2014 with the assumption that it is not a faraway research site nicely bound in its isolated space, free from the influence of the movement of ideas, academic or popular. On the contrary, I intended to trace the genealogy of some of the theoretical frameworks and perspectives put forward in their work from the beginning with an eye toward linkages among individuals and institutions. The data collected, however, indicated that AÇEV took a more active role in the way that educational theory is reproduced, and I turned to Oppenheim and Stambach's (2014) *global norm making* as a useful concept for understanding how AÇEV came to use Functional Literacy, and how this approach to adult literacy education has been

transformed at this NGO and pushed back into the academic discourses around adult literacy education through conference presentations, books and book chapters, reports, and journal articles.

Global norm making as an analytical tool is adapted to educational research by Stambach and collaborators (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014; Stambach, Raby, & Cappy, 2011) and from Halliday and Carruthers' (2007) work in international law. Halliday and Carruthers (2007) studied how an international financial architecture is constructed with law as its principal foundation. They analyzed actions of the International Money Fund, World Bank, regional development banks, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations and other international professional associations (with strong support from the United States) in the construction of bankruptcy law in various countries. Through four mechanisms—actor mismatch, diagnostic struggles, contradictions, and indeterminacy—Halliday (2009) argued that cycles of reform are pushed at the international and national levels as well as the intersection between the two until the inherent tensions within the reforms are resolved and norm making settles. The focus of Halliday's (2007) framework is on the emergence, propagation, and stabilization of norms (p. 265). Halliday and Carruthers (2007) tested the usefulness of their theory on how the globalization of bankruptcy law has proceeded through three cycles: (1) at the national level through recursive cycles of *lawmaking*, (2) at the global level through iterative cycles of *norm making*, and (3) at the nexus of the two.

Halliday and Carruthers' (2007) work on the emergence and propagation of international bankruptcy law gives clues on the global convergence in functional literacy as a valid approach to adult literacy in the last few decades, despite significant variability in the way functional literacy is implemented. Such variability in implementation of theory stems from amplification,

distortion, and creative reinterpretation in practice, according to Halliday and Carruthers (2007). Their analysis is on the implementation of theory of law, of course. I have, instead, based the following analysis on the adaption of this analytical framework for educational research (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014; Stambach, Raby, & Cappy, 2011). According to Oppenheim and Stambach (2014), the educational ideas, values, practices, and norms move and transform across space and time through networks of knowledge and influence in which our work as researchers is also included, but not always determining. These networks link the decisions of researchers and policy makers to the decisions and lived experiences of actors who are often not involved in the formulation of research or policy. AÇEV, and the network of organizations, national and supranational actors in which it is embedded, connects immigrant women living in Istanbul and their lived experiences with the work of researchers living in distinct social, economic, and historical contexts.

The meaning of functional literacy in Istanbul to one of the field advisers for example, is constructed through ongoing processes of contestation and interpretation. Such contexts are often categorized as global, national, and subnational, but instead of such compartmentalization, Oppenheim and Stambach (2014) conceptualized “educational actors and phenomena as positioned within an endlessly intricate lattice of influences and relationships that converge and metamorphose at distinct nexuses” (p. 378). After the initial analysis of the data collected in Istanbul, it became clear that analyzing AÇEV as such a nexus had more explanatory potential than scientific linkages. Describing AÇEV as a nexus where an intricate lattice of influences and relationships converge and metamorphose provided a means to talk about the forest while also acknowledging the trees. Instead of relatively stable linkages that move theory intact, global norm making argues that norms are refracted or reproduced within social, political, and

economic asymmetries between differentiated persons and their differentiated worlds.

Oppenheim and Stambach (2014) acknowledged that each actor has agency, but their influence is unequal. In their view, educational norms change and become substantiated as practice through processes of iteration and recursivity, and the consequences are often unanticipated, leading to further contradictions and tensions that keeps the processes moving.

True to my experience as a researcher as well, Oppenheim and Stambach (2014) defined researchers doing ethnographic fieldwork as products and also potentially vectors of global norm making. Such a perspective is useful in explaining the relationship between AÇEV's professional staff designing and implementing programs in consultation with academic advisers, who recreate normative standards for the design, implementation, and assessment of the programs. These academics are associated with universities and professional organizations, and they link AÇEV with many actors from across the globe. Interviews with academic advisers, AÇEV professional staff, and volunteers revealed previously unseen lattices of influence, and asymmetrical capacities in the reproduction of educational phenomena.

Why functional literacy. Before starting fieldwork, I assumed that the three founders of AÇEV (Cigdem Kagitcibasi, Diane Sunar, and Sevda Bekman) played a much larger role in shaping the literacy curriculum, but two veterans of the literacy team (Hilal Kuscul and Meltem Canturk) recounted that it was indeed Banu Oney and Aydin Durgunoglu who made the major decisions in the creation of the first Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) in 1995. The program that emerged was 90 hours spanning two and a half months, meeting three days a week for three hours at each gathering. It began with five teachers and fewer than 100 participants. By 2003, it had reached 35,000 participants from 17 provinces (Oney & Durgunoglu, 2005).

Bogazici University had been influential in this process, however, as I predicted. When I interviewed Durgunoglu, she remembered that AÇEV approached Banu Oney, then a faculty member at Bogazici University, to help create the literacy curriculum, and with Oney's suggestion, she became involved in the project as well. They were told of the need for the program and AÇEV's commitment to this new area of programming, but there were no other limitations on how they would shape the program. Durgunoglu remembered handwriting early drafts of the course materials at Oney's office on the BU campus, only a few miles from the AÇEV main offices in Mecidiyekoy. With the signing of the protocol with MONE in 1994, the pilot FALP program in five people's education centers could start the next year (Bekman, 2008). At this time, both Bekman and Kagitcibasi were also faculty members at BU in Primary Education and Psychology, respectively. Oney had an existing relationship with the founders, and Oney and Durgunoglu were already collaborating on literacy research, albeit with children. Thus, BU is a key institution on the lattice of actors and influences that cultivated the creation of FALP, and even though Oney and Durgunoglu created the program, they were closely tied to the founders. Presumably, the founders' familiarity with functional literacy and discourses around it, has contributed to their approval of the program.

Aydin Durgunoglu, now professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, along with Banu Oney who has since retired from the University of Delaware, played a significant role in adoption of Functional Literacy as the guiding approach to AÇEV's adult literacy programs illustrating the role of researchers as vectors of normative production. When asked why she thinks functional literacy was the approach chosen, Hilal Kuscul posited that it was fitting the *zeitgeist* of 1990s Turkey; it approached literacy participants as individuals, which was in line with the rapidly urbanizing country where many of the traditional social structures

were being redefined. Yet, she admits that such an analysis is only made in retrospect, and functional literacy was accepted as a matter of fact at the time. In fact, as both Canturk and Durgunoglu also discussed, the main challenge and controversy was to have a literacy program that started from sound-letter pairs rather than words. Both children's literacy in K-12 and adult literacy programs in people's education centers started with memorizing words, and sentences; sound-letter connections were taught much later. Hilal Kuscul argued that, in fact, cognitive awareness of the relationship between sounds and letters were not explicitly taught, and the learners were expected to reach such an awareness through "intuition." On the contrary, Durgunoglu and Oney argued that the transparent orthography, along with other characteristics of spoken Turkish, made it more appropriate to start teaching phonological awareness earlier in the process. They conducted research with Turkish children, which indicated that phonological awareness contributes to word recognition in the early stages of reading acquisition fostered by the transparent orthography of Turkish with regular letter-sound correspondences (Oney & Durgunoglu, 1997). In a study comparing English-speaking and Turkish-speaking children, they found that phonological awareness develops as a function of the characteristics of the spoken language; characteristics of orthography, and its representation of the spoken language, affect phonological awareness and word recognition (Durgunoglu & Oney, 1999).

Durgunoglu stated that "our definition of functional literacy has always been a little bit wider." She argued that what AÇEV has considered as the major function of literacy is the betterment of women's daily lives rather than describing a role for them that is deemed suitable by the larger society. Additionally, they assumed a relationship between literacy, critical thinking, and women taking a more active role in the public sphere. She admits that functional literacy is sometimes dismissed as educating the workforce for the capitalist system, but that has

never been one of the goals of AÇEV's Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP). She considers the decoding and coding as well as associated skills in learning how to read and write necessary, but they are complementary to the larger goals of the program, and a good literacy program, in her view, cannot stop there.

Furthermore, both Durgunoglu and Kuscul argued that functional literacy was a more useful term for advocacy in the 1990s when the prevailing wisdom in Turkey was that decoding a simple sentence was enough to consider someone print literate. Kuscul remembers that illiteracy was often discussed as a disease to be cured, creating a dichotomy of "literate" and "illiterate." Meltem Canturk contended that until AÇEV came to the scene there had been scarce research and thinking on how best to teach literacy to adults as opposed to children. Durgunoglu explained they were directed to functional literacy to be able to argue that literacy has many dimensions, which include political participation. She remembered a reading passage in the first iteration of FALP that encouraged women to run for local office (*muhtarlık*). These dimensions also include being able to "function" in situations such as navigating the complicated public transport system in a city such as Istanbul. Canturk stated that the programs offered by MONE at the time assumed that print literacy was only an issue in rural Turkey, and consequently the curricular materials primarily focused on life in a village. The "functions" and "situations" described by the AÇEV program were better representative of the experiences of the large number of internal immigrants living on the peripheries of a megacity. Durgunoglu argues being able to use print literacy in situations that would allow women to be actively taking part in social life is a prerequisite for dealing with systemic discrimination, regardless of whether it is called a "function" or something else depending on the literacy approach used.

On one hand, Durgunoglu does acknowledge the label “functional literacy” falls short of describing the characteristics of the AÇEV programs and the way they are implemented; on the other hand she finds some of the more ostensible political stances of New Literacy Studies or Freirean perspectives in terms of gender equality too idealistic and not fitting the socio-economic and socio-political realities of Turkish women. In the fiercely paternalistic Turkish context, she argues, the program has to effect change slowly and carefully in small steps and not ignore the kind of domestic environment to which some of the participating women have to go back at the end of the day. She warns against putting too much emotional pressure on women to change existing structures. FALP does explicitly try to inform women about their rights, and discourses and normative beliefs that unfairly target women are deconstructed through reading passages and classroom discussions. I believe what Durgunoglu is referring to here is a tightrope that FALP professionals and volunteers have to walk in attempting to support women to deal with some of the injustices and discrimination they face while also considering the implications of such “radical” change for the participating women. Despite not representing the design and implementation of the program, she does not consider changing functional literacy as a label, which would require a fundamental reevaluating the current iteration of AÇEV programs, as a priority. The program is continuously revised either way; in fact, in late September 2014, Durgunoglu was working on revising the teachers’ handbook to include more content on the use of technology.

Talking to other AÇEV staff such as Hilal Kuscul yielded a more nuanced perspective on Durgunoglu’s narrative. Kuscul (also a BU graduate and a former student of Sevda Bekman) was there at the start of the program as professional AÇEV staff. She considers the background of Banu Oney and Aydin Durgunoglu in psycholinguistics as a determining factor in functional

literacy being preferred over other approaches. Over the years, *kadın destek* (supporting women) has become a larger part of the program, and the content of the curriculum has changed significantly. In fact, she says, the name of the department was changed from Functional Adult Literacy to Literacy and Women's Support, signaling the change of focus in 2003, and now they internally use "basic literacy" and "advanced literacy" to refer to the two original adult literacy programs at AÇEV. Professional staff in Mecidiyekoy are more receptive to moving away from functional literacy as a way to describe their programs. Hilal Gencay, for example, acknowledged that functional literacy does not reflect how they implement adult literacy education in the field.

I believe the main reason they continue to use the label is that they can do so without many repercussions. There is no controversy in Turkey about the implications of the term, and the confusion of attendees at an international conference about the discrepancy between the term functional literacy and the program's implementation is not enough of an incentive to make a drastic change. After all, for two decades, AÇEV has used functional literacy to legitimize their programs by arguing that it is superior to what MONE has had to offer. Distancing themselves from the approach now will potentially lead to confusion among partners. Rather than leaving the legacy behind, they have instead been expanding and transforming what functional literacy means, which admittedly is no longer compatible with mainstream interpretations. That being said, since they also publish about their work in respected journals, it may also be that, at least to some in the global educational arena, their programs represent what a functional literacy program should look like. Considering that they were just recognized by the Library of Congress with the "international prize," and they continue to collaborate with MONE, this strategy is working both inside and outside of Turkey for the time being.

Iterations and recursive cycles over the years. According to Durgunoglu, through revisions and iterations, the program responded to the changes in what the participating women themselves expressed as essential literacy needs to have a more comfortable daily life. Meltem Canturk added that AÇEV projects and initiatives on women's issues and in-service training nourished the literacy program as well. She also highlighted the necessity of reading international research on adult literacy education to keep abreast of latest research and thinking. She lamented that there was not much research in Turkey on adult literacy education. Both Hilal Kuscul and Aydin Durgunoglu referred to the EU-funded gender study and collaborations with other NGOs working on women's issues in Turkey as effective in swaying their decisions in content revisions. Kuscul reflected that the increased attention of the media on violence against women (e.g., honor killings, physical and emotional abuse) combined with more institutions publicly speaking up on these issues made the socio-cultural context more conducive to challenging systemic abuse and discrimination. She remembers that when the FALP was getting off the ground, there were not as many panels, conferences, and presentations offered by state and non-state actors in Turkey, and they used to have a harder time recommending in-service learning opportunities to their staff and volunteers, but now they are able to choose among many options. All of these statements illustrate some of the key institutions, events, and socio-cultural changes in the Turkish society that have contributed to the iterations of the FALP curriculum and implementation. They do explain how AÇEV is a distinct nexus where “endlessly intricate lattice of influences and relationships that converge and metamorphose” (Oppenheim & Stambach 2014, p. 378).

AÇEV brings people, ideas, state and non-state national and supranational organizations, including private corporations for funding, from diverse backgrounds to make their programs

possible. One of the programs I visited in Istanbul was collaborating with the local municipality and the local people's education center to provide the physical space while using materials prepared by researchers residing in the United States and printed with the support of the U.S. Department of State, Office of Global Women's Issues. The content of the reading passages and teacher's handbook information sections were created with the help of various Turkish NGOs active on numerous issues affecting the participants' lives (e.g., reproductive health, constitutional and legal rights of citizens, preventing discrimination against people with disabilities). One of the banners advertising AÇEV's online literacy portal had the Ashmore Foundation, the Emerging Markets Foundation, and J.P. Morgan on the lower left corner. These lattices of relationships have undoubtedly shaped how adult literacy has been interpreted and reinterpreted in the last 20 years.

They certainly have differing degrees of influence, however. Aydin Durgunoglu, for example, has two decades of service to AÇEV as an academic adviser, and she has the authority that comes with being a professor at a global research university. She was instrumental in adopting and persisting with functional literacy despite significant changes in the curriculum. However, it would be too simplistic to point to her in explaining the idiosyncratic way AÇEV has used functional literacy. There are three co-occurring processes with more explanatory potential here: the implementation and revision cycles; the feedback received from participants, volunteer teachers, and field advisers; and the lattice of relationships and networks in which AÇEV is embedded, and their various agendas.

I will also argue, however, despite a yearlong engagement with AÇEV as an institution, there is still an "indeterminate quality" (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014, p. 378) to AÇEV's role in global norm making. Even with hours of interviews that aimed to flesh out how AÇEV

transformed functional literacy to include a definitive focus on supporting women, my conclusions are still one of the several possible interpretations of how and why functional literacy began to mean something distinct from earlier definitions at AÇEV. Furthermore, AÇEV is in the process of redefining and resituating themselves responding to more recent changes in the adult literacy landscape in Turkey, and it is not certain that they will continue to use the Functional Literacy label in the future. In fact, I was told by Mutlu Yasa and Meltem Canturk (two veteran members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department) the results of my research may be a part of this change in terms of providing an outsider's perspective, which in turn encouraged me to be more cognizant of the role I have played in the engagement, transmission, and transformation of educational phenomena (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014) through this research process.

According to Hilal Gencay, one of the newer members of the literacy team, there is emerging interest at AÇEV's main office in exploring some of the alternative approaches such as multiple literacies. She told me that she wrote grant and award applications as a significant part of her role likely encouraging her to take note of differing approaches adopted by international agencies. According to Mutlu Yasa, as the number of people who are reported as "illiterate" by the Turkish Statistic Institute decreases every year, MONE is less willing to continue the collaboration with the same enthusiasm. She insists that AÇEV adult literacy would continue to exist since there is still a demand and need for them. However, AÇEV may have to try offering literacy programs without MONE's support. Aydin Durgunoglu stated that one possible new direction would be targeting people aged 15-29 who are not employed nor in education and training (NEET). More than 20% of 15-29 year-olds in Turkey are in this category, and women are disproportionately represented (OECD, 2014). One thing is certain: AÇEV is not a static

institution, and only time will tell how they will reinvent themselves in the fast-changing local and international context.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has served two main goals. First, I explained what functional literacy means at AÇEV and how it differs from more mainstream (scholarly) understandings. Such clarity is required to make sense of their curricular materials and their relationship to perceptions and enactments of support in the literacy classroom. Second, using AÇEV as a case, I illustrated how educational norms are manufactured by national and supranational actors. I have argued that global norm making as a lens, combined with a historical approach, is useful for comparative and international research in adult literacy education to understand how certain institutions become a nexus where educational theories converge and metamorphose. Although scientific linkages help reveal the role of academics and their connections in norm making, they are insufficient for explaining the movement of ideas in our highly connected world.

Chapter 5

AÇEV's Adult Literacy Curricula and Social Support

Now that I have introduced AÇEV as an NGO and the theoretical foundation on which adult literacy programs are situated, it is time to take a closer look at their curricula and the curricular materials' implementation in the field. This chapter will demonstrate a link between the design and implementation of the curriculum, specific classroom activities, and perceived and enacted social support in the classroom. The analysis of the curricular materials (teachers' manual, students' book, and activity booklets of FALP and ALAIP) and implementation of both programs in the field (based on fieldwork) will also make the discussion of the elusive nature of the label "functional literacy" in the previous chapter much more tangible through specific examples from the materials and classroom activities. The analysis presented in this chapter will explain how instructional activities in the classroom and AÇEV's underlying approach toward literacy shape networking opportunities for participants and the availability of social support. It will also explicate how the national literacy framework (e.g., rules and regulations on credentialing students' literacy) shape AÇEV programs and the way students are connected with each other.

Unanticipated Gains?

Before the two weeks I spent in AÇEV's main offices in Istanbul, I had no access to AÇEV curricular materials beyond descriptions in research articles (Durgunoglu, 2003; Durgunoglu, 2010; Durgunoglu, Oney, & Kuscul, 2003; Gulgoz, 2003; Kagitcibasi, Goksen, & Gulgoz, 2005; Oney & Durgunoglu, 2005). Due to the brief space available in journals, it is difficult to get a solid grasp of the characteristics of the curriculum and its implementation in the

field. Furthermore, as described in the previous chapter, the Functional Adult Literacy Program and the Advanced Literacy and Access to Information Program (ALAIIP) have been modified many times over the years. The most recent significant revision was done in 2011 when AÇEV decided to infuse three themes in all of their programs including adult literacy: peace, protecting children, and preventing violence against women. However, according to both Durgunoglu (academic adviser for the literacy programs) and Kuscul (a veteran of the adult literacy team and current assistant to the general manager), both programs had undergone major revisions before the addition of content based on these themes. Kuscul argued that the adult literacy programs took the lead on integrating these issues into their programs, and as a result the change was minor. However, this is yet another example of AÇEV's different programs and initiatives feeding each other.

Durgunoglu stated that there are pragmatic considerations for the iterations of the programs as well; when the printed material stock is low, the members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department and the academic adviser always think of possible revisions to update the curricular materials, and they try to use of all the printed materials before a major update to prevent waste. The curriculum contains information on the legal framework affecting women in Turkey as well as changing print literacy practices of women, thus it is crucial to constantly update the information. As the curricular materials are continuously being revised, the reports and journal articles (including the research reported here) only capture a snapshot of the FALP and ALAIIP programs, which are living breathing curricula that go through iterations with feedback from the field.

In addition, the volunteer teachers are expected to bring reading materials to the classroom, most often newspaper articles. According to Durgunoglu, reading newspapers in the

classroom has been a part of the FALP and ALAIP curriculum design since their inception in 1995 and 1998, respectively. This complicates the notion of a static curriculum as much as the revisions over the years. According to Mutlu Yasa, one of the members of the literacy team in Mecidiyekoy, there are guidelines for sharing articles in the classroom. First, the volunteer teachers are expected not to bring any stories that would be perceived as overtly partisan. I interviewed Yasa a few months before the presidential elections in August 2014, and she further explained what she meant by distinguishing between bringing reading materials corresponding to citizenship education (e.g., on branches of the government) and an article that is overtly for or against one candidate. They also discourage the volunteer teachers from bringing newspaper articles on health considering the poor job print media does communicating research in health, diet, and wellness as well as “third page” news stories, which in the Turkish media landscape usually means tragic stories that are often violent and written in a melodramatic tone. They feature stories with sensationalist, misleading, and sexually suggestive titles, and women are frequently victims (Mora, 2008). Mutlu added they recommend that teachers bring stories such as those around environmental protection, hygiene (to ward off diseases), and home economics.

Even with a 13-day volunteer teacher training (two and a half weeks), there is also variation in curricular implementation by each teacher, of course. The women’s support sections in FALP, which I will describe and analyze in detail in the following discussion, featured lengthy essays in the teachers’ manual as resources for the teachers. Teachers, then, have some flexibility in how much of that informative essay they bring to the classroom discussion. In the Riverside classroom, the teacher Nihan used the teachers’ manual open in front of her as a guideline during the discussion, whereas in Smoky Valley, Elif had her own notebook where she had summarized

the day's topic in her own words. Likewise, some teachers are more comfortable than others managing a conversation on potentially volatile topics such as ethnic or religious discrimination.

One of the stereotypes about women who are not print-literate in Turkey is that they are from conservative families that are identical to each other, with little political diversity among them. However, this could not be further from the truth; I observed different ethnic and religious groups with opposing views, and in the heated political atmosphere of the country after Gezi protests of 2013 before a major election, it was difficult to find topics without political implications. As a result, even though every classroom does read the same stories from the students' books, during the newspaper reading and women's support sessions, there is space for increased variance in implementing the program. To illustrate such differences, I will analyze a women's support discussion around discrimination in the Riverside classroom based on detailed field-notes taken during the class, and compare it with observations in Smoky Valley, Roadville, and Rainy Hill.

In the next chapter, I will argue, borrowing from Small (2009), that participating women at the literacy programs that I observed receive distinct advantages from being embedded in an effective resource broker such as AÇEV, an organization that—both intentionally and unintentionally—connects people to other people, organizations, and their resources (p. vi). In this chapter, I will argue that this gain is not as unanticipated as I initially assumed based on AÇEV's curriculum for both FALP and ALAIP; the former intentionally, systematically, and insistently brings attention to systemic and widespread discrimination against women and other vulnerable groups in Turkey, including children and individuals with disabilities, and offers action-facilitating informational support. The information includes a list of state and non-state organizations to approach so as to make concrete changes in the participants' lives, albeit modest

and calculated. Furthermore, creating a safe, friendly space is one of the explicit goals provided to the volunteer teachers, who are continuously supported themselves by experienced field-advisers who bridge the field practices with the main offices in Mecidiyekoy. The implementation of the curriculum is affected by the collaborating institutions in the field, and as such the curriculum examined here is mediated and constrained by characteristics of cooperating institutions, the resources available in the community, and the ability and desire of the volunteer teachers to bring social support to the foreground.

Meltem Canturk, the coordinator of the adult literacy and women's support department managing more than 30 full-time professional employees in eight districts including Istanbul, contended that even though research and revision cycles have always been in the literacy programs' DNA, they have been hesitant to highlight the social support implications of participating in the program. She added that they have suspected various "unexpected gains and a multiplier effect" of literacy, and specifically of participating in FALP and ALAIP, yet they have also been careful not to make claims on these issues without research.

Global Norm Making and AÇEV's Curricula

In Bekman's (2008) official history of the AÇEV, Hilal Kuscul explained that it has been frustrating to be cooperating with so many different NGOs since what the programs can achieve is constrained and shaped by the capacities of the collaborating institutions. Her statement demonstrates that the collaborations are, at times, contested and vexing due to differing visions and capabilities. She added that she has given up the idea that these issues can be resolved completely, yet it could still be possible to reach an optimal resolution so as to make cooperation possible (p. 63). The adult literacy programs have cooperated with other NGOs the most, relative to other AÇEV programs from the very beginning, and they also had the most number of

research projects studying various aspects (Bekman, 2008). According to Kuscul, the research studies were necessary to prove the effectiveness of a program such as FALP that is alternative to a program that has been around a long time (p. 81).

The current curriculum is a product of these collaborations with NGOs and research projects. Based on the interviews with AÇEV professional staff and academic advisers, the FALP and ALAIP curricula were profoundly shaped by the relationships that AÇEV has fostered with other NGOs and research conducted under the auspices of AÇEV in partnership with universities. There were two noteworthy examples that most often surfaced during the interviews. The first is the “empowering women” study done with Koç University, where Kagıtcıbası was working in 1997. By 2003, “women’s support” had become a part of the FALP and ALAIP curricula, and the name of the department also started to include the term (Bekman, 2008). The “gender study” as it was referred during the interviews, or “attaining gender equality in education and social participation project,” aimed “to deal with as well as to implement interventions in relation the attitudes, practices and policies which negatively affect and hinder girls’ and women’s access to educational services as well as their participation in social life in Turkey” (Cameli, 2008, p. 5). Kuscul and Durgunoglu argued that this research and its influence on the curriculum was a worthy illustration of how AÇEV benefited from working with other national and supranational state and non-state actors. The study was supported by EU funds as a part of the “Grant Program on Integrating the Gender Issue into Development Cooperation” and was a collaboration between Education Reform Initiative (ERI), established in 2003 at Sabancı University in Istanbul, Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates (KA-DER) and AÇEV.

At AÇEV, Hilal Kuscul was the project manager and coordinated AÇEV's activities for the gender study. Bearing in mind her connection with the adult literacy program, it is likely that she was influential in re-concentrating on the intersection between gender and print literacy in Turkey. She posits that the adult literacy programs have been paying attention to relationship between gender and print literacy from the beginning as it has always been obvious that their participants were not print literate due to mechanisms discouraging or actively preventing women from attending school. She also admits, however, even with the recognition of gender as a variable, some of their early materials had artwork that reflected gender stereotypes. Through numerous workshops, meetings, and consultations, AÇEV's literacy curriculum was opened to criticism with the explicit purpose of modifying the programs. One of the iterations included revamping the images used in the curricula to ensure that they did not propagate gender stereotypes. Despite this, both Durgunoglu and Kuscul argue that AÇEV programs have been pioneering in challenging Turkish gender stereotypes from the beginning. However, two decades is a long period in any vibrant society, and the curricula and their implementation have been altered iteratively to remain robust and relevant in helping women better their daily lives and creating awareness of the lived experiences of potentially vulnerable populations, including children and people with disabilities.

The primary reason to paint an historical picture of curricular iterations is to demonstrate that the texts were constructed with contributions from multiple stakeholders, and they bear traces of revision cycles while still keeping some elements from the earlier versions. It is not always possible to trace how a certain paragraph or concept found its way into FALP and ALAIP curricula beyond author names printed on the book and various recognitions in the prefaces. As such, the inquiry here is based on the understanding that education texts are constructed with

multiple, at times incongruent, perspectives. The following analysis will principally center on reading passages and women's support segments with the postulation that they are linked to perceptions of social support and fostering an atmosphere that is conducive to social interaction.

AÇEV's Literacy Curricula

Language is one of the most salient characteristics of a literacy curriculum. AÇEV curricular materials have always been only offered in Turkish, and in fact, the most distinguishing characteristic of the program is argued as being appropriate for Turkish orthography and morphology. The 1982 Turkish Constitution establishes the official language of Turkey as Turkish, and the educational system, formal and non-formal, is to use Turkish as the only medium of instruction. Article 42 of the Constitution states that "no language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education." Different ethnic groups', especially Kurds', desire to use their mother tongue for educational activities have historically been deemed a threat to the unity of the Turkish state (Gok, 2012). Attempting to offer an adult literacy course in any language other than Turkish would have likely led to a court case and eventual banning in the 1990s when FALP came into existence. Even journal articles with titles such as "historical and political context of adult literacy in Turkey" (Sayilan & Yildiz, 2009, p. 735) takes Turkish for granted as the language of literacy education without any mention of linguistic diversity in Turkey and its role in print literacy statistics. This is despite the fact that print literacy levels are significantly lower in south eastern Turkey, where there are more speakers of languages such as Kurdish and Arabic as their mother tongue. With decades of internal immigration, there are millions of people whose mother tongue is different than Turkish living in large cities such as Istanbul as well. Furthermore, Istanbul is now home to tens of thousands of refugees from Syria from the 1.7 million that fled

into Turkey in the last few years (Icduygu, 2015), and as such the fact that adult literacy courses under the auspices of MONE including those offered through AÇEV are only available in Turkish determines who can access these programs.

For a small minority, literacy programs can even function as a Turkish as a Second Language course. One of the participants I interviewed, Handan at the Riverside FALP course, is from Ethiopia. She did not have an ID issued by the Turkish state even though her late husband was Turkish, and she was only able to enroll in the programs offered at the adult education center run by the local municipality using her daughter's identity. She was attending two other courses (exercise and embroidery) and AÇEV's FALP to improve her Turkish. She said taking part in the courses helped improve her Turkish remarkably despite preferring English for the interview. She did speak Turkish in the classroom, and the teacher regularly checked to see if she was able to follow the discussions.

There is a large and politically powerful group of people in Turkey for whom Turkish being the sole language for educational activities subsidized by the state is undisputable. There have, however, been notable changes in the last decade (e.g., a state supported TV station in Kurdish), and it is difficult to predict the direction of possible changes in terms of language policy in education. One thing is certain, adult literacy researchers have to start taking linguistic diversity in the country into account while drawing conclusions from statistics. I have no reason to believe that AÇEV is deliberately discriminating against any community in Turkey; after all their protocol with MONE is such that AÇEV is only able to operate within parameters determined by the state policy on language. However, associations between ethnic, religious, and linguistic identity, as well as taking part in formal and non-formal educational activity, need to be studied to better understand systemic discrimination encountered by certain groups.

Unfortunately, the current political atmosphere is such that even suggestions along this line would be perceived as a threat to national unity, and the dominant Discourse (Gee, 2005) on language policy, I argue, also influences educational researchers' perspectives by providing the framework on what is normal and acceptable.

Another essential characteristic of the curriculum is that the educational materials are mostly printed as books and booklets. This matters for two reasons: (a) field observations indicate that literacy practices are rapidly changing in Istanbul especially among the younger participants and (b) AÇEV is responding to this change with a completely online curriculum that is only accessible on the Internet via Web (i.e., there are no mobile applications yet). Almost all the participants I observed had a smart phone or tablet, and those who did not expressed a desire to obtain one as soon as it is financially feasible.

Tezay, the volunteer teacher from Rainy Hill, stated that she was surprised by the number of participants with smart phones. She observed the women seemingly needed essential goods and services, yet they chose to spend their money on a phone instead. However, the interviews and observations suggested that these devices were more than mindless consumerism or a status symbol. One of the recurring themes from the interviews were that even in households with a PC and internet connection, the women were not allowed to use these devices to go online (or they were discouraged from doing so). As a result, having a mobile device with Internet capabilities has become much more central to meeting their communication and entertainment needs.

Jale, born in 1987 and attending the FALP class in the Riverside classroom, always carried her tablet with mobile internet connection with her. She was still struggling with print literacy in certain contexts, yet she frequently depended on her tablet for communication and access to information. She found the program AÇEV offered in collaboration with the local

municipality in Riverside thanks to a Google search on her tablet with the help of a cousin, and she regularly practiced sending and receiving messages on social media. During our interview she showed me a game that she liked to play on her tablet. She said, “I play it way too much” and gave examples of conversations on a social media site where she exchanged messages with friends.

Meltem Canturk, from the main offices, posited that unless women are physically restrained, they learn how to integrate technological tools in their daily lives. She compared the emergence of mobile devices in the classrooms with segments of the early versions of the literacy curriculum that aimed to teach women how to use washing machines, which became quickly unnecessary as they became mainstream at the turn of the millennium. Hilal Kuscul agreed with Canturk, and she was surprised to learn that not only Jale was “addicted” to the same puzzle game that Kuscul loved playing on her phone, she was ahead of her in levels by a large margin.

None of this is to dismiss inequalities in the way technology is accessed by different socio-economic groups in Turkey. By all her accounts, Jale used her mobile device to consume rather than produce; she practiced print-literacy skills producing social media posts using the touch screen keyboard; however, she did not have any plans to learn coding or to write mobile apps for the platform she was using, for example. Additionally, she struggled with paying the monthly internet connection bill. She did not have an internet connection and wireless networking at home, which she shared with her grandmother, and the mobile data she was able to afford was less than she desired to use. Lastly, the internet browser on her tablet was not compatible with the *ACEV’de oku yaz*, the distance education initiative of AÇEV. She wanted to get a PC as soon as possible, but she was not sure when she could afford one since her income

was limited to what was given to her by grandmother's retirement checks. She hoped to find employment once she was "fully" print-literate and use the distance education platform to eventually get a basic education diploma.

ACEV'de oku yaz (Read and Write at AÇEV) and *Kolay Bilgisayar Programı* (Easy Computer Program) are two responses to the changing literacy practices and needs of AÇEV's participants. Easy Computer Program was developed and field-tested by Hilal Gencay from the main offices in 2013, and it was available as a digital literacy program during the fieldwork in spring 2014. It is not available in as many locations as the FALP and ALAIP yet, and the program length is much shorter, eight weeks and 16 hours in total versus 120 hours each for the other two. However, Gencay argues that there is considerable interest in the program since it focused on some key aspects of women's lives in terms of accessing e-government applications including checking their children's grades online and making doctor's appointments. In 2013, E-government Gateway provided approximately 700 services from 90 institutions to 15 million registered users, illustrating the rapid expansion in e-government service development and dissemination in Turkey (Hiziroglu et al., 2013) and the growth in demand among AÇEV's participants to learn how to use these services.

ACEV'de oku yaz includes basic literacy programs FALP and ALAIP, and it also contains the curriculum for the Level II literacy courses offered by MONE, which aim to teach social studies, sciences, and basic math to prepare participants for the basic education diploma exam. The basic education diploma is required to continue with one's education, and it is the only way to get a driver's license. As a result, it is especially desired by young people wanting to be able to drive. According to Hilal Gencay, *ACEV'de oku yaz* is the most comprehensive literacy program offered at AÇEV. Since pure distance education programs are practically non-existent,

even in the Turkish higher education terrain at the moment, it is evident that AÇEV is trying to position itself for the increased use of the Internet for distribution of educational services in the near future in Turkey. Meltem Canturk observed resistance to the use of distance education for adult literacy programs within MONE and among some of the key stakeholders; however, Kuscul, Canturk, and Gencay all enthusiastically expressed their commitment to distance education as a form of distribution for their programs. Durgunoglu stated that especially if AÇEV refocuses its efforts to reach out to the young unemployed population that is not at school, Internet distribution of their programs would likely become much more effective and accepted by this younger population. She added, however, there is some disagreement regarding the direction that the NGO should follow in response to changing demographics, and some in the institution feel strongly about AÇEV's commitment to working primarily with women. As the analysis of the two print-based literacy programs offered at AÇEV, FALP and ALAIP, demonstrates, this commitment to women's issues is evident in the program, and the content offered and the way it is implemented has demonstrable implications of perceived and enacted social support inside and outside of the classroom.

Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP)

The analysis was conducted using classical content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) following concepts and procedures specified by Graneheim and Lundman (2004). Coding categories were derived directly from the text data, and more abstract categories and themes were constructed (Charmaz, 2006) using an inductive approach. The content analysis provided the topics and themes to be questioned using tools offered by Gee (2005, 2011) with the presumption that "language is inextricably bound up with ideology and cannot be analyzed or understood apart from it" (Gee, 2008, p. 4).

FALP educational materials provided by AÇEV consist of student book, teachers' manual, and two small exercise booklets, one with numeracy and the other with reading texts as the focus. The booklets are added to give the volunteer teacher flexibility in assigning extra work depending on participants' progress. The student book comprises 25 units, and the teachers' manual provides guidelines to volunteer teachers in classroom activities and the women's support topics. Twenty-five units are designed to be completed in 120 hours, nine hours a week with each meeting spanning three hours. One of the four field advisers, Gulden, who was one of the five volunteer teachers at the start of the FALP program in 1995, indicated that in the past they encouraged the teachers to have a three-hour block lesson, however now they are recommended to have a one short break, which has implications for perceived social support; during the break I observed women help each other with their work, discuss personal issues, and plan social activities outside the classroom, including getting together in each other's homes. AÇEV main office staff and field advisers emphasized "adequate time" as an essential characteristic of a literacy program. AÇEV's FALP added 30 hours to the then 90-hour MONE program, and by adding ALAIP as an option, they effectively doubled the length of MONE's Level I basic literacy program. Women are strongly encouraged to continue with ALAIP by the teachers and volunteer teachers upon completing FALP, which translates into 240 hours of instruction provided in about seven months.

There is some flexibility regarding program length, depending on the availability of the classroom space and the teacher and demand from the participants. Two of the four teachers I visited said that they were planning to add extra time depending on the demand in the classroom. In one classroom, many of the women continued with ALAIP upon completing FALP with the same teacher, and they added "a few weeks" extra time in between programs; they were planning

to add extra time after ALAIP as well. After finishing the ALAIP program, there are a few options for the women. They may stop attending literacy courses if they do not need a diploma, attend MONE's Level II literacy course to prepare them for the basic education diploma exam, or in some cases they may feel ready to take the diploma exam right after ALAIP. The teachers and field advisers approach participants whom they think could pass the exam and encourage them to take it. The basic education diploma is the first step for women who want to advance their education.

In contrast, the only male volunteer teacher I observed, Irmak, could not offer extra time; he had to finish his program a month earlier than planned because the people's education center needed the classroom for a student art exhibit. When I contacted him a year later, he was in the United States to take care of a sick relative and had to leave the program he was teaching before coming to the United States, but he was thrilled to report that he was able to find another teacher to take over his class. In line with other aspects of the programs (e.g., offering physical space conducive to social interaction), program time can also be constrained by the limits and desires of the institution that AÇEV is collaborating with in the field.

The units are organized around Emine and her family's experiences described in a main reading passage each week. Each unit also contains a women's support section that aims to "create consciousness" among women (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul & Dagidir, 2012, p. ii) building on the reading passage. The term *bilinçlendirmek* could also be translated as "to raise consciousness," but translating as such draws an unwarranted parallel with Freirean terminologies. In addition to the informative sections to help the teacher prepare on women's issues to "increase awareness and consciousness" (p. viii), there is also a bibliography at the end of the teachers' manual so they can continue informing themselves on women's support topics.

Another essential component of the program is keeping a diary to help the teacher assess progress and create a venue for the women to “express themselves, and get their voice heard” (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul & Dagidir, 2012, p. ix). This activity proved to be a vital contribution to the sense of perceived support in Smoky Valley with Elif as the teacher. There were two sisters, Bahar and Ceyda, who had been with Elif for about seven months when I visited their classroom in May 2014. They were better than the rest of the class in writing when FALP began in November, and as a result Elif encouraged them both to write a diary. Very quickly, they started to write about their family and all the difficulties that they had faced in Istanbul since moving there “from the East,” a small village in the district of Van. They also wrote about their family, and their descriptions of their mother led Elif to want to meet her in person; she had already written back to the mother via the diary “as if sending letters to each other.” They invited her to their home, and Elif remembered that their mom gave her a big hug “as if to have known her for years.”

She was impressed by the support that the family members provided for each other, which was the main focus in many diary entries. When Bahar and Ceyda mentioned this visit in the classroom, more women wanted to invite Elif and the rest of the class to their homes, and this paved the way for the class to plan and carry out other social activities including a “cross-continental” trip to Emirgan with 12 women learners using the van available in the people’s education center. There was a popular flower exhibit at a city park in Emirgan, and the women also had a picnic with food that they prepared at home and spent the whole day together. This increased social support at Smoky Valley illustrated how program length, curricular activities encouraging social interaction, a volunteer teacher who prioritized socialization, and effectively utilizing resources in the host institution contributed to a program that provided more to the

participating women than literacy and numeracy instruction. During our interview, Elif told me that she knew a lot about personal lives of at least half of her students, and she was often approached by the women at the end of the day to talk to her privately about personal matters. I interviewed Bahar and Ceyda together to understand how diary writing contributed to social interaction outside the class. They remembered that Elif asked if their mother could visit the classroom someday, but they told her that their mother's health would prevent her from visiting and invited Elif to their home instead. Bahar, the more talkative of the two sisters, assured me that they each comfortably shared private aspects of their personal and family lives in the diary.

Another fundamental aspect of the program is not using standardized testing. Four assessments are implemented during the course of the program, but the teachers emphasize that they are not "exams." The assessments consist of sentence dictations, answering basic personal questions, reading a short passage, and answering questions measuring comprehension. One of the field advisers, Filiz Ismen, stated that the teachers do use the assessments to decide who will be given the MONE program completion certificate, but it is not the sole measure of success. The teachers are encouraged to have a more holistic approach that aims to gauge if the women are ready either to continue with ALAIP or the Level II literacy course offered by MONE. I observed one of the assessments given in Rainy Hill program, and the students did not exhibit any signs of stress that may normally be associated with testing. For instance, they continued to engage in small talk during the assessment. The curriculum uses the word *tarama* (combing, scanning) rather than *sinav* (exam) to describe the assessments; *tarama* does not have the same baggage associated with taking an exam. I argue that this more holistic approach allows the teacher to make individually tailored decisions, and the lack of pressure associated with

standardized testing contributes to a more relaxed environment where social interaction can become one of the primary characteristics of the program, at least in some classrooms.

Lastly, from the beginning, the teachers are encouraged to get to know their students by name. They are asked to share how they decided to be a volunteer teacher in the first lesson setting up the tone of the classroom as a space where personal stories can be shared. In the teachers' manual, the teachers are asked to inquire on the first day "why they have come to the program, what their expectations are, and how they think knowing how to read and write will affect their lives" (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. 2).

This emphasis on women's lived experiences is amplified in the reading passages, and especially in women's support sections in each unit. Acknowledging the lived experience of the participating women is also connected with how reading comprehension is conceptualized: the teachers' manual states, "We do not acquire the information that is embedded in the reading passages by combining sounds, and deciphering the meaning of words, we do so by drawing conclusions based on our personal knowledge, and the relationship between the words and sentences with each other" (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. vii). The lived experiences, and knowledge of participating women are acknowledged as crucial to meaning making, and as such knowing who the women are, and what they bring to the classroom is underscored as an essential tool in helping them make meaning from reading passages, newspaper articles, or any other text in the classroom. This emphasis is also associated with an atmosphere in which women can feel at ease sharing personal experiences, and perspectives, which, in turn, contributes to social interaction as I observed in the classrooms.

Human rights. The curriculum is built on an intrinsic theory of human rights; the rights of people stem from being human, and they are non-transferable, indivisible, and inalienable.

They are guaranteed by the constitution and the laws in the Turkish society (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. 18). This definition is recurrent and is articulated slightly differently in the teacher's manual based on the context (e.g., women and men both have the right to go to school since as human beings they have the same intrinsic rights, which are protected by the Turkish state).

Social construction of gender. The most prominent theme in the FALP curriculum is that gender is distinct from sex, and it is socially constructed. The reading passages and the women's support sessions repeatedly come back to this notion, and informative sections for teachers in the teachers' manual offer examples from other countries to illustrate that normative gender roles are not universal. The women's support sections aim to deconstruct what it means to be a woman in terms of social expectations, responsibilities, and demands, and they establish a link between these expectations, discrimination, various forms of violence and oppression that women and young girls are facing in the country. Even though the emphasis is on women, the women's support segments of FALP argue that the social construction of reality and gender may have negative implications for men and young boys as well. For example, boys are discouraged from crying and expressing their feelings even when they are scared, and girls are socialized into doing domestic work early on (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. 104). The women's support section discussions usually start with negative implications of gender norms for women's quality of life (e.g., women are discouraged from working outside the home or traveling alone, even though both are their intrinsic human rights protected by the law). Beliefs and gender normative statements such as "boys do not cry" or "you can't do it, you're a girl" are given as illustrations of how early in life the societal construction of gender roles begin.

The curriculum employs some of the tools described by Gee (2005, 2014) to make gender roles and their meaning for the daily lives of women apparent. In one example, there is a story that describes the daily routine of Mehmet, a male name; in the story all the activities he performs are usually associated with women, and the traditional and stereotypical family dynamics are reversed to help women question the normative roles and appreciate the absurdity of expecting women to do so much. In another example, this short story is told by the teacher. A father and son have a car accident and are both badly hurt. They are both taken to the hospital. When the boy is taken in for an operation, the surgeon (doctor) says, "I cannot do the surgery because this is my son." Then, the teacher asks the women how this is possible, followed by a discussion over jobs and their connections with gender roles and expectations. Sexist idioms such as "long hair, short mind," "those who do not beat up their daughter (when necessary) would slap up their knee (in regret)," and phrases such as "like a man" (as a compliment) and "like a woman" (as a derogatory term for men) are studied to infer what the society thinks of women.

Deconstructing gender roles is the primary way in which critical thinking and reasoning skills are practiced in the written curriculum. The main goal of the women's support discussions is to help women question mechanisms that are holding them back from having a desirable quality of life, and a close second is to not recreate the existing gender roles for the next generation. In every instance, discussion starts by explaining why the way things are in terms of gender roles is not necessarily the natural order of things, and how it is constructed by the society including the women in the classroom. Women are encouraged to treat boys and girls in a way that prevents forming expectations and roles that have made their own lives challenging, such as restricted mobility, various forms of violence, and hard yet unpaid domestic labor that is seldom

appreciated. The reading passages and related women's support discussion argue that both boys and girls have the right to go to school, be outside of the home, and seek employment. I argue that a Freirean way of "reading the world" in relation to gender disparity in various variables from educational attainment to wealth accumulation is one of the basic tenets of AÇEV's adult literacy programs.

The women's support text in the teacher's manual, which shapes the class discussions, emphasizes that the construction and operation of these roles are supported and made possible by both men and women (with men wielding more power). For instance, one of the units explains the role gossip plays in preventing women from participating in social life as a control mechanism in Turkish society. The same text argues that mothers expecting their daughters to follow traditional distributions of labor in the household contribute to remaking of existing gender relationships. The women participating in the program are asked to refrain from gossiping about other women's whereabouts, as it is often used by men in their lives to prevent their freedoms including being in the public sphere and traveling. Marriage is analyzed as an institution shaped by asymmetries of power; forced marriages between young women and older men, marriage as a way to control women's sexuality, and marriage between people with family connections are discussed. The women are encouraged to bring lived experiences and stories from the lives of people they know via questions such as "Is there anyone in your neighborhood with disabilities who cannot take part in social activities?" (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. 207). The teachers are repeatedly reminded to be sensitive and nonjudgmental since some of the women may lack a marriage or a birth certificate themselves, they may have only had a religious wedding ceremony, or their parents may have never gotten them a birth certificate as births often happened at home in rural Turkey. Not having birth certificates also

makes it harder for the state to prevent child abuse and neglect (e.g., forced marriages of children with much older men).

These can be extraordinarily difficult issues for women to discuss, as I myself observed in the classrooms. Oya from Rainy Hill was forced to marry an older man as a 13-year-old child (and as the unofficial second “wife,” as polygamy is illegal in Turkey). When I met her, she was the mother of two children and in her mid-twenties. She joked that people were always shocked to hear she was not print-literate based on their impression of the way she carried herself. Her husband’s control of her behavior was palpable; she really wanted to talk to me about her experiences, but when some of the other participants suggested that her husband might be angry that she talked to a man, she only agreed to talk to me with the volunteer teacher Tezay in the classroom. Her husband’s sister, Pelin was also in the classroom, and based on Tezay’s account, Oya and Pelin had a troubled relationship. Pelin’s presence in the class implied that the husband could hear who Oya was talking to even while she was at the course. During our interview, she focused on her children and their future rather than the traumatic childhood and the forced marriage. Her story demonstrates the tightrope that the volunteer teachers have to walk not to make her feel judged or blamed. It also illustrates that social or familial connections may not be inherently beneficial or liberatory for women.

Elif, the volunteer teacher from Smoky Valley, made a doctor’s appointment with a counselor for one of her students when she realized that she was not well-equipped to help her. Based on Oya’s story of forced marriage, it is foreseeable that some of the women may need professional help, and unfortunately mental health treatment options are limited in Turkey. The teachers are still encouraged to refer the women for this kind of help, however, and they report consulting with the field adviser in this process; a mechanism exists for them, as well, if they

need help to support the women in the class. The field advisers are more experienced than I expected: two of them have been with AÇEV since the inception of FALP in 1995. The youngest, Suna, has worked for AÇEV since 2005, and Gul has been there since 2000. They all started as volunteer teachers and have years of knowledge and experience in helping participants and the teachers. Collectively, they have more than six decades of experience, and they also work as trainers for the volunteer teacher training program. They play a crucial role in program implementation, which creates an atmosphere for participating women to have to deal with traumas in their lives that they have heretofore been able to suppress or ignore.

The textbook encourages participants to help each other against systemic and entrenched discrimination toward women in Turkey. In the unit on people with disabilities and their rights to a life with comfort and dignity, the text explains that women are often expected to take care of children with disabilities or the elderly. The infrastructure is not conducive for such people to enjoy mobility with minimal help; there is stigma against their presence in the public sphere. Often it is women as sisters, mothers, and daughters who are expected to take care of family members in need, which in turn leads to isolation for themselves. In one of the social support segments, the participants are encouraged to help women who are caretakers for family members with disabilities. Offering childcare so caregivers can run errands and have a bit of a break, inviting the caregivers over for neighborhood events to help them feel more integrated, visiting them at their homes, or at the very least ringing their doorbells and asking them if they needed anything are listed as “necessities of human relations,” and such behaviors are said to ensure cooperation and mutual support.

Various types of violence toward women are discussed toward the end of the FALP textbook and teacher’s manual (probably considering the extremely personal and sensitive nature

of the issue) with strategies to help and support other women exposed to violence with an eye toward involving governmental and non-governmental institutions. The teachers' manual lists institutions women can contact to receive further, more personalized help. The interviews with AÇEV main offices staff and the field advisers indicated that AÇEV has reached out to lawyers in the NGO sector to offer tailored answers to student questions numerous times, and field advisers have information and experience in terms of nearby organizations that may be of more immediate help. In the FALP textbook and teacher's manual, which contains resources to help teachers discuss these issues, discrimination is discussed in the context of normative gender roles and uneven distribution of power between men and women in the family.

The deconstruction of gender is the principal illustration of how the program aims to help participants gain critical thinking skills. Even though the analysis here is only based on the latest iteration of the curriculum in 2012, the presumption that reading requires thinking, reasoning, inferencing and employing prior knowledge on a topic (Durgunoglu, 2000) seems to have been within AÇEV's conceptualization of literacy from the beginning. Thinking and reasoning are encouraged as a means to critically evaluate the ideology behind everyday language especially the social construction of gender, but it is not only limited to gender. Forms of discrimination are discussed with the explicit purpose of creating empathy for those who are ill-treated, whether people with disabilities, members of different ethnic and religious groups or sexual orientations, immigrants, the elderly, and children.

However, the program falls short of thoroughly questioning the social construction of gender roles. There are plentiful references that aim to help women start understanding and appreciating themselves as individuals as opposed to letting their identities be shaped by the role they assume in the family structure. However, all the reading passages are still structured around

a normative Turkish family with Emine, her husband, their two children, and the paternal grandmother living in the same house. Living in an extended family may seem non-normative to an American audience, but not only is it fairly common in Turkey, where nursing homes and assisted living facilities are virtually non-existent and culturally rejected, it is usually the men who would take care of their parents by providing a place of residence. In fact, this norm is often used as an excuse to discourage women from claiming their portion of the family inheritance. More significantly, much of the informational support provided in the curriculum assumes that the women are married, whether with an official certificate or not, and no examples of single, separated, widowed or divorced women raising a family in a context where a modified version of the nuclear family is the norm. There are a few references to different sexual orientations, yet the curriculum is otherwise entirely hetero-normative.

Empathy. The participants are encouraged to evaluate the reading passages and scenarios in the women's support sections from the perspectives of all the actors involved, but especially those who have been ill-treated in the scenario. Versions of "how would you feel?" and "how do you think they feel?" are repeating questions in the 25 women's support segments; participants are also asked "what do children on wheelchairs feel when they are discriminated against?" (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. 207). Empathy is the principal tool to conjure identification, understanding, and advocacy, with repeated warnings against pity. Based on the interviews with the AÇEV main office staff and field advisers, empathy is also used extensively during the teacher training to help volunteer teachers (generally from middle- and upper-class backgrounds in Istanbul) to identify with their future students as fully developed human beings with rich lives of their own. Conflict resolution strategies are the focus of two of

the women's support sections for times when empathy alone is insufficient to avert conflict and harsh disagreements among adults, and between children and adults.

Creating pressures on other institutions. One of the recurring themes is that the participants are responsible for acting on information provided in the class, especially information from the women's support sections. This responsibility includes putting pressure on other institutions. For instance, women are encouraged to demand a "safe school environment" for their children from "those in authority" and to "apply to social aid organizations," if necessary, to provide for their children's schooling needs. Sometimes these organizations are identified, such as "people's education centers, local MONE offices." In other instances, "state" is used as a general term. For example, women may need "to demand the state to provide a safe environment" so that they can enjoy their right of travel. Or, "the state" is responsible for taking precautions to provide a safe school for girls and increase access. It is emphasized, however, that to demand financial aid in the form of scholarships and a safe school is the responsibility of all adults in the child's life, from parents to extended family (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. 334).

Political participation. Participants are encouraged to support women candidates for political office in elections, with the understanding that sometimes demanding institutions and organizations to offer better services will not be adequate. Political participation of women as candidates for office at various levels is supported in the context of information about the election processes in Turkey and statistics indicating discrepancies in office holders in terms of gender: "as we discussed earlier, jobs should not be categorized as for men and for women, and as such women also could be *muhtar* (local elected official)" (Durgunoglu, Oney, Kuscul, & Dagidir, 2012, p. 174). The assumption that only men can hold certain offices is further

discussed as a sexist belief to prevent women from taking an active decision-making role in the their communities.

Legal framework on women’s issues. From the beginning, the state is described as the responsible party along with the individual person to ensure that people—and especially women and children—are able to enjoy their rights. There are numerous references to the law on marriage and inheritance. Barriers to women owning and accumulating property, including shaming, are discussed, and women are encouraged to seek ownership of the family property. Awareness of legal frameworks is described as a prerequisite to be enjoying the consequences of the implementation of the law; women need to know that an official marriage certificate is fundamental in seeking property or alimony after divorce, for example. They are also asked to share what they have learned in this classroom with their peers. An official marriage ceremony (rather than a purely religious one) is emphasized as the way to receive the protections and rights that come with the institution of marriage for both the women and their children. Women are encouraged to share success stories in convincing their domestic partners to get an official marriage certificate, which illustrates the action-facilitating nature of the information.

Toward the end of the program, the Turkish Civil Code as well as the Family Protection Law are discussed focusing on specific provisions that allow women to take more control of their lives. One salient example is the so called “family remark” on the property deed of the family residence. The “family remark” prevents the husband from selling the house without his wife’s approval even if the deed is in his name. Women are encouraged to seek free help from municipalities and bar associations to get a “family remark” put on the deed of their residence even if the husband is the sole owner preventing him from selling the property without the spouse’s consent.

Health and hygiene. Basic germ theory and its relationship with common illnesses, rudimentary information about a balanced diet, and safe handling and preserving food are health and hygiene themes (in the FALP curriculum), which are at times connected with a “consumers’ rights” narrative, encouraging women to use their print literacy skills to purchase safe foodstuffs.

Reproductive health and sexuality. Some of the discourse under this theme reflects the links often presumed between increased literacy and schooling, with lower levels of childbearing, later first pregnancy, and increased time between pregnancies—the family planning framework. However, across multiple weeks, the program goes beyond localized misconceptions that are used to blame women, such as being the sole determiner of the child’s sex. A balanced diet during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and vaccinations are discussed with stress on the mother’s quality of life, comfort, and the baby’s and mother’s health and safety. The health of women’s reproductive organs are discussed from childhood to menopause, with emphasis on breast cancer. Most relevant to this study is that up-to-date information about the changes in Turkey’s single-payer health system is shared in the classes with a list of institutions women can contact in case of financial difficulty. The informational support is action-facilitating, and it is combined with emotional support from peers and the teacher.

Protecting children. This theme is brought up in two ways. First, it is discussed in the context the reproduction of gender roles and discrimination, and second providing a safe and comfortable living space for children where they are protected from discrimination and various form of abuse including sexual abuse is emphasized as the responsibility of parents, extended family, the larger society and ultimately the state.

Advanced Literacy and Accessing Information Program (ALAIP)

ALAIP and FALP differ in several ways. First, there is no MONE program corresponding to ALAIP. The director of the literacy and women's support department at AÇEV, Meltem Canturk, explained that MONE had a similar program that aimed to solidify what is taught in their Level I literacy course in the past, and AÇEV used the space in the regulation to develop FALP II in 1998, with the first programs opening the following year. There came a point where the iterative process required such significant changes that they renamed the program as Advanced Literacy and Accessing Information Program rather than continuing with the Functional Literacy moniker. The program is 120 hours in length with at least nine hours a week, and the schedule is decided by the class within constraints, such as the availability of physical space at the collaborating institution. Participants may only take ALAIP, or they may continue with ALAIP after completing FALP first.

I did observations for three weeks in two ALAIP programs, but the one in Smoky Valley had students who first finished FALP with Elif before embarking on the ALAIP. Irmak's class in Roadville was offered as a stand-alone program at the people's education center, and associated with the extended time spent together, there was more social interaction and perceived and enacted social support in Smoky Valley. In effect, I ended up observing one pure ALAIP program.

Unlike FALP, the ALAIP program does not have extended women's support segments integrated into the curriculum. There is more emphasis on group work in the classroom, however. In Irmak's class especially, the women worked in pairs for the activities. In fact, the two women I interviewed from Roadville, Feray and Gamze, sat next to each other and worked together on the activities. Thus, although there is much less curricular content encouraging social

interaction, there are more opportunities for women to talk to each other within the program. That being said, as Figure 4-1 illustrates, implications of gender norms and the injustice of ignoring them are brought into discussions during reading and writing activities. The text above the cartoon reads “examine the cartoon, and tell us what you think has happened here.”



Figure 4-1. A cartoon from the ALAIP student textbook

The program assumes that the basic coding-decoding process (as conceptualized in FALP) is established, and that the participants can now turn their attention to meaning making and evaluating messages critically. The prior knowledge and experiences of the participants are instrumental since the programs presume that “the meaning is not in the text but the interaction between the text and the reader” (Durgunoglu, Gencay, Budak, & Ural, 2013b, p. 6). There is less space for women to share experiences with the whole class, and instead the volunteer teacher is encouraged to use more pair and group work. However, there is variance in practice, understandably so since the teachers are given more room to tailor the program to student needs.

Some of the themes explored in the FALP are present in ALAIP as well: discrimination against women and people with disabilities, domestic violence, human rights, and its relationship to national laws. However, the bulk of the content is on social studies, sciences, and citizenship education.

Based on the thematic analysis of FALP texts (Charmaz, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) and building on the thematic analysis using Gee's (2005, 2011) discourse analysis methods, I argue that perceived and enacted social support cannot be considered as an unanticipated gain (Small, 2009) in AÇEV programs. The FALP curriculum intentionally, systematically, and insistently studies systemic and widespread discrimination against women and other vulnerable groups in Turkey, including children and individuals with disabilities, and offers action-facilitating informational support. The women are also encouraged to offer emotional, informational, and instrumental support (e.g., childcare) to others in the class and to those suffering discrimination and violence in the community. Creating a safe, accepting atmosphere is one of the explicit goals of the FALP and ALAIP programs. However, the implementation of the curriculum is shaped by the collaborating institutions, and as such the curriculum examined here is mediated and constrained by characteristics of cooperating institutions, the resources available in the community, and the ability and desire of the volunteer teachers to bring social support into the foreground considering the sensitivity, and potential volatility of the issues discussed. To conclude this chapter, I will now turn to some examples from the implementation from the fieldwork in the four programs I visited.

Tales from the Classroom

I did not take detailed field notes in every class while inside the classroom as it made it much harder to blend in and not distract students and the teacher, especially in a small classroom.

However, the tiny classroom on the top floor of the education center owned and run by the local municipality was full of students that day (about 15 participants) in the Riverside with Nihan as the teacher, and the discussion on discrimination was lively with participation from many students with differing perspectives and stories. I quickly realized that this was an excellent illustration of the women's support side of the curriculum in practice and its implications for social support. Since some of the stories made the whole class burst into laughter, and the reaction from the participating women to other stories created enough of a mask for the noise of my pen, I felt that I was not making the participants uncomfortable taking notes.

The women's support section was congruent with the main theme of the text on the student book. A child is isolated, made fun of, and bullied for having to use a wheelchair, and his father has decided to take him out of school to prevent him from getting hurt. After discussing the text from multiple perspectives, the teacher opened the conversation to the women's lived experiences of discrimination. The conversation illustrates that the participating women felt comfortable to share deeply personal stories of discrimination in the classroom in a way that is not upsetting or disrespectful to different identities or political views represented in the classroom. The teachers asked if the students had experienced any form of discrimination before. The conversation below is taken from my notes (i.e. close approximation of what was said in the class that day).

Participant: "I have experienced this. For example, we're Kurds, and I went through this at my son's school for two years. Both I and my son were going insane."

Teacher: "Was that the teacher?"

Participant: “Exactly, yes it was the teacher, and the teacher also instigated the other kids. They treated him as if he was a murderer, a six year old. Thankfully, I took him out of that classroom, and it is much better now”

Kevser chimed in next lightheartedly and told the classroom how she told the bus driver who was taking them to the tulip festival in Emirgan (a social event outside the program that most students attended) not to treat her differently for “being ugly”; he was offering “a younger, prettier woman” a snack. The class burst into laughter, and this helped dissipate the tension from the first story. An older woman told the story of her daughter wanting to get enrolled in a *baglama* (a Turkish stringed instrument) course and not being accepted since she was told, “We are Alevis, and we do not accept Sunnis in this class.”

The teacher acknowledged student experiences by summarizing them and then continued with reading from the support section in the teachers’ book. As she was talking about various forms of discrimination, a couple of students talked about feeling singled out for being women, and also “illiterate” and “uneducated.” The teacher, in response, shared a friend’s story that demonstrated that even college-educated women can be discriminated against or exposed to domestic violence. The participants added other stories involving violence against women that they saw on the media, which stimulated more experiences on the intersection of discrimination and gender.

“A man can live on his own, but a woman cannot rent a place to live alone. She would be told you’re a woman, and you cannot.”

“I am widowed for 34 years without any regular income, and whenever I go to a government office to get help, I am ignored. If my husband had worked at a government job, or had insurance, maybe it would have been different. They humiliate you, the rich.”

They discussed built environment as a means of discrimination by restricting mobility for people with physical disabilities or other health issues. The participants took an active role in the discussion by taking turns answering the teacher's questions or bringing in new angles. One of the students stated that discrimination can be dealt with better together:

Teacher: "How?"

1st Participant: "We can collect signature on things."

2nd Participant: "Yes, in this community [the neighborhood where the course is located], there is a mobile station antenna that we do not want. It is right behind the school. We will collect signatures to get rid of it."

1st Participant: "There is this part of the street I live on, and they do not have lights.

People have to walk much longer at night. They came (politicians running for office)

during the election, and I told them about it. They have not done anything about it yet."

The participants listened to each other, took turns sharing their own experiences, and the teacher moved the discussion forward by following the main structure of the support section in the teachers' manual. From the stories they shared and the way they interpreted the recent progress in the city's infrastructure, it was obvious that they subscribed to different political views; however, they maintained a sense of openness for differing views.

I have observed a similar atmosphere in other locations as well; it was however most ostensible in Smoky Valley, Rainy Hill, and Riverside, all programs that started with the FALP curriculum with the women's support section. The discussion sessions made it ordinary for the women to share stories that they may have seen in the media, heard from friends and family, or gathered from their own lived experiences.

The teachers play a fundamental role in facilitating a discussion that is potentially grounds for harsh disagreements in the politically charged and highly polarized Turkish context. Emotions are especially close to the surface talking about traumatic events with political implications. The most remarkable example was Elif's classroom talking about the Soma mine disaster which led to the death of 311 coal miners, the worst mine disaster in Turkey's history. When I visited the classroom on May 16, only three days after the disaster, the women were upset and very much identified with the families of the miners, who were featured on the media day and night. The support section was used as a space to talk about the difficulties that working people have to live with in Turkey (e.g., working without insurance, decent equipment, or any kind of job security). They discussed whether one could call what happened an "accident" based on all the failings of the mining company to provide a safe working environment.



Figure 4-2. Two pages from the sketch book of a participant

One of the women shared a page from her sketch book that she made the night before (see Figure 4-2). She was inspired by a drawing by the child of a deceased miner, and the class discussed what they thought the child was trying to express. Notice that on the adjacent page, there is a vase with wildflowers that the same participant drew a few months earlier on Elif's birthday. It says "*iyi ki varsın*" (great to have you). One could argue that there is no tangible benefit from these discussions, and they would not be wrong in terms of making concrete changes in the participants' lives. However, these discussions do recognize that the lived experiences and opinions of the participating women are valuable and worth sharing; based on interviews with 15 participants, this is not how their views are treated in their personal lives.

Similar to any other educational activity, the classroom discussions in the AÇEV literacy programs do not necessarily lead to transformation of ideas or identities. I talked to Lila from the Riverside classroom a few days after the discussion on discrimination. I mentioned that I was temporarily residing in a community with historically minority population (specifically Jewish, and Armenian citizens of Turkey); she replied "they always live in the best parts of the town in nice houses, don't they?" with the implicit assumption that I would agree with her because I was an ethnically Turkish citizen of the country, even though I currently reside elsewhere. As such, with the evidence provided on the curricular materials, as well as from field observations and interviews, I do not argue that AÇEV programs somehow turn women into activist feminists whose new life goal is to contest systemic sexism through helping other women. I do argue, however, the program provides a safe space for women to express themselves, and the program deliberately tries to provide action-facilitating informational and emotional support while encouraging the participants to offer support to each other as well. Furthermore, certain aspects of the curriculum such as diary writing help the volunteer teachers get a glimpse into the

students' home lives and personal and family problems, and this was evident both in Smoky Valley and Rainy Hill. As a result, increased social interaction and support reported by some of the women can reasonably be explained by the characteristics of the literacy programs in design and implementation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reported the thematic and discourse analysis of the curricular materials used at AÇEV adult literacy programs. The curricular materials challenge existing gender roles and aim to create a sense of solidarity among women against various forms of discrimination and violence. The curricula encourage women to build their classroom discussions based on their and their loved ones' lived experiences, signaling that the classroom is a space where stories about the women's personal lives and problems are welcome. Based on the analysis presented, I argue that both FALP and ALAIP curricula play a significant role in the perceived and enacted social support within the programs.

Chapter 6

Social Support within AÇEV's Adult Literacy Programs

In the previous chapter, I argued that based on the analysis of the curricular materials and their implementation in the classrooms, perceived and enacted social support as well as interaction among participating women cannot be considered an unanticipated gain (Small, 2009) of participating in an AÇEV adult literacy program. In this chapter, I will focus on forms of social support perceived and enacted in the classrooms. The results reported will be based on interviews and the survey (for the perceptions) and observations in the field (for enactments). I asked the teachers and the professional AÇEV staff to describe instances when they helped a participant on a non-academic issue; this account includes their reports as well.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The results of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) survey (n=30) provide the context for the interview and observation data on the perceived social support and examples of its enactments in the AÇEV classrooms. As shown on Table 6-1, the survey has three subscales, assessing perceptions of social support adequacy from three specific sources: family, friends, and significant other. MSPSS includes only 12 items, with each subscale consisting of four items. The survey includes a 7-point Likert scale ranging from very strongly disagree (1) to very strongly agree (7) in response to the items, as such each item is scored 1-7. The scoring is done by presenting means and standard deviations for each item, and then for each factor. Note that MSPSS is usually administered as a pen-and-paper survey; however, to get rid of print literacy as a confounding variable, the questions were read out loud, and the survey administrator noted the participants' choices for each question.

Table 6- 1

MSPSS Item and Subscale Means and Standard Deviations

<i>MSPSS Items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.	5.73	2.02
2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	4.97	2.43
3. My family really tries to help me.	5.87	1.93
4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.	6.07	1.91
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.	5.00	2.41
6. My friends really try to help me.	5.13	2.29
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.	3.57	2.54
8. I can talk about my problems with my family.	5.83	2.12
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.	5.50	1.93
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.	5.17	2.39
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions.	5.77	1.89
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends.	4.40	2.16
<i>MSPSS Subscales</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Significant Other	5.22	2.31
Family	5.93	1.94
Friends	4.61	2.33

The most significant finding is the relatively low perceptions of support from friends as opposed to family and significant other. It is in line with the observation that family is considered to be the most crucial source of social support for the majority of Turkish people. For some of the women, their significant other was also their husband and the father of their children. It may seem counterintuitive, then, that significant other as a factor is less of a source of support than family. The interviews indicated that the women feel restricted by their significant others who may have prevented them attending literacy courses in the past, for example. When they think of family, they often think of their own parents, siblings, and children as much as significant others. These results are also congruent with the support women perceived from other women in the classroom. They provided each other with emotional and informational support, however, they turned to the teacher or other AÇEV staff “when things went wrong.”

Social Support and AÇEV's Adult Literacy Programs

Both FALP and ALAIP provide a suitable environment for social interaction; however, the emphasis on social support is much more evident in the former. In some instances social support is conceived as a way to help fight systemic sexism, various forms of violence, and discrimination toward women. In all the programs, I observed—or heard about—instances of enacted and/or perceived emotional, instrumental (tangible in the form of goods and services), and informational support, with the latter two action-facilitating inasmuch as they help women solve problems. Furthermore, all 15 of the women I interviewed told me that they found the classroom environment to be friendly and welcoming despite occasional conflict and disagreements. They perceived their peers to be supportive and friendly even in cases where the relationship did not involve any time outside the classroom. There is certainly possibility of social desirability bias; they may have told me what they thought I wanted to hear. However, I corroborated what they said with classroom observations and interviews with other actors such as teachers and professional AÇEV staff. The women discussed difficult topics with respect and patience. I observed them making plans for spending time outside of the class and offering each other emotional support in the form of encouraging their peers so that they could achieve print literacy skills.

Often, various forms of support were interwoven, as in the case of a woman in Elif's classroom in Smoky Valley, who regularly approached the teacher about stresses in her home life and who was offered nurturant emotional support through lengthy discussions after other students left the class. Upon realizing she was not going to be able to offer the mental health services that this woman needed, Elif helped her make an appointment with a psychologist close to her home. Irmak noticed that one of his students could not see the board and accompanied him

to a private ophthalmologist. When it turned out the young man suffered from high-degree myopia, he helped him pay for the visit and the thinner lenses not covered by his insurance. He also provided emotional support in trying to increase the young man's sense of efficacy as a learner now that he had much better vision. He was planning to go back with him to see the eye doctor again; the man's myopia was so severe that the final prescription had to be given after his eyes had adjusted to glasses with smaller prescriptions.

Much of the instrumental support in the form of materials and services flowed from the teachers and AÇEV to the participating women. All the educational materials including notebooks and pencils (along with books and booklets as primers) were provided by the program. Volunteer teachers were coming from wealthier and better-connected communities, and they sometimes sought help from their own networks of social support for their students. For instance, Irmak got help from his brother to pay for the eyeglasses and the ophthalmology visit. The teachers also provided informational support (beyond what is provided in the curriculum) to provide a more tailored "women's support" component. They collaborated with field advisers, which connected the field to the resources of AÇEV as an established and well-connected NGO, to find answers to unique questions asked by the participants. The field advisers and the teachers often drove or paid cab fares for students to be able take the basic education diploma exam in people's education centers that are far away from their places of residence.

Students perceived mainly emotional and informational support from their peers. Often, they worked on lessons together during breaks, encouraged each other, and kept each other up-to-date about missed lessons and assigned homework. In a classroom where the participants assured me that they did not spend any time together at all outside the classroom (Rainy Hill), I learned the following week that nearly the whole class visited a classmate to wish her

condolences after she lost a family member. They did not consider it to be much support when I inquired further; after all there was very little they could do to ease this woman's sorrow, and from their perspective all they did was to visit and say "*başınız sağolsun*" (may you and your remaining loved ones enjoy health). Even though they undervalued emotional support they provided in this instance, they mentioned that they enjoyed spending time with the other participants when they could.

In Riverside and Rainy Hill (the two sites more conducive for social interaction in terms of physical space), I observed that some of the women arrived half an hour before class, and stayed after the course ended sitting around tables and drinking tea. Especially in Riverside, the teacher Nihan joined them before the class. At Riverside and Smoky Valley, they had planned and carried out visits to museums and parks a few times allowing them to have a good time and get to know the teacher and fellow participants outside the classroom. In some cases, they became close enough to spend time outside of the classroom in their homes as well. Regular, sustained interaction is essential for creating social ties (Small, 2009). These activities provide opportunities for sustained interaction.

Although, the research design and questions did not include such an emphasis, I recognize that social support at the Rainy Hill site may look different, be perceived differently, and have distinct meanings than at other sites. It is a *cemevi* serving the Alevi community in Istanbul, which has a distinct socio-political and socio-economic history than the Sunni majority. The theoretical framework I used posits that the concept of social support is historically and socially constructed, and as such this discrepancy needed to be acknowledged.

Teachers as Sources of Informational, Tangible, and Emotional Support

The teachers played a significant role both in creating a welcoming and friendly atmosphere and in directly providing some of the support not specified in the curriculum. Elif, in the Smoky Valley program, was approached by a participant whose son was struggling with drug abuse. She first conducted some research online and then helped the participant reach out to an institution for her son to be treated. Elif was not sure that if the son was going to accept to be admitted at AMATEM, one of the major institutions providing addiction care in Istanbul. There were also students who wanted advice on exceedingly private matters such as how to go about dealing with an unfaithful husband. She admitted that she did not always have useful suggestions for each question asked, but she always tried to help them feel “more in peace with themselves.” There were issues that she did not quite know how to offer help such as various forms of domestic violence against women, which in her perspective contributed to women treating their children harshly. She, at the very least, listened to them carefully trying to act and seem “strong and non-judgmental” as best as she could. She considered creating a safe space for women to voice difficulties in their lives noteworthy. She also established a lending library for the women and their children.

Tezay in Rainy Hill shared books and toys that her children did not need any more with the participants. She offered emotional support to participants who stayed behind to get her opinions on issues of personal nature. She was not as comfortable as Elif talking about and commenting on their personal lives; however, she did check with the field adviser when she thought AÇEV could offer further help. Both Elif and Tezay shared their personal phone numbers with the students, and they exchanged text messages with students on a regular basis. They called the participants to check on them if they were missing in the class, and they made

and shared a list of participant phone numbers with the class. (In fact, one of Elif's students told her she was sad when she did not receive a call from her about the lesson that she missed the week before while I was in the class.) Nihan in Riverside had reservations when it came to sharing personal phone numbers, including hers. Irmak, on the other hand, did share his phone number with his students; however, his gender, in his mind, made it harder for him to find appropriate ways of spending time with the participants outside the classroom. He did, however, try to help participating women on personal matters as well. For instance, he was offering advice to a woman to help get a visa to Germany to visit with family.

Teachers' personalities, preference, and gender influenced how much they made themselves available outside of the class. Of the four teachers, Elif from Smoky Valley on the Asian side was the most eager in cultivating relationships with her students outside of the classroom. I spent two afternoons with her by the new metro station in Maltepe drinking tea and eating *börek*s. She told me that being a teacher at AÇEV enriched her life in ways she had not foreseen. She loved her role as a teacher and worried that if AÇEV were to stop their literacy programs, she would not be able to continue teaching. She regularly met with other volunteer teachers from her cohort. She showed me photos of teachers during a brunch they recently had. She was in regular contact with the field adviser and other volunteer teachers in the vicinity. Irmak was also in contact with other teachers; however, he felt awkward attending events such as the brunch Elif attended as he would have been the only man. He knew of the programs close to his in Roadville, and he collaborated with another teacher to help some of his students take the basic education diploma exam. However, he admitted that he sometimes did not know what would be deemed appropriate in the interaction of men and women in the community he was teaching.

Tezay in the Rainy Hill program on the European side was similar to Elif in her willingness to make herself available outside the classroom. She, however, was more concerned about refraining from topics that she did not know how to handle. And yet, she knew details about the intimate lives of her students and did not stop them when they approached her to have a private conversation at the end of the class. This helped her navigate sensitive topics such as polygamy and official marriage certificates in the women's support discussions. Nihan in Riverside did not share her contact information with all of the students and was most hesitant to discuss the women's intimate lives. She regularly spent time before and after classes in the garden, smoking and drinking tea. She focused her attention on younger women, and the conversation often included her appeal to continue with ALAIP and a basic education diploma. She has been a volunteer teacher since 2005 mostly teaching FALP. As a result, many of the volunteers that started with her were not teaching anymore, and she lacked connections with current teachers that Elif enjoyed.

“Better than Being at Home”

The classes offer a safe social space for women where they can spend time outside of the home with less judgement and disapproval from the society at large. In fact, the social component of the program may become the main draw for a minority of the students who keep coming to the courses even after they start considering themselves to be fully print-literate. Feray and Gamze were an illustration of this; even though they both considered themselves to be literate (in fact, Gamze had a basic education diploma), they kept coming to the classes. When I talked to Irmak (their teacher in Roadville ALAIP site) a year after the fieldwork, I learned from him that Feray and Gamze were attending the ALAIP again, this time at a new neighborhood closer to their homes. They were friends outside the class as well, and coming to the literacy

class was a part of their social life. They both thought they continued to learn new things, though, beyond basic literacy. The ALAIP has social studies, sciences, and numeracy, and the curriculum is slightly different each time since the teachers bring reading materials such as newspapers and other printed materials from their daily lives (e.g., public transportation schedules, menus).

AÇEV does not prevent the women from coming back to the same program (either at the same space or somewhere else) and as a result, for a select few, the programs become a place where they can safely socialize outside of the home. Feray complained that her husband still “got on her case” about coming to the class, but she did not listen to him anymore. Both women were older (in their late 50s and early 60s) and argued that they did not care as much about what others say in terms of what is appropriate for them to do, including the men in their lives. Gamze was separated from her second husband (both arranged marriages, the first one when she was young) after years of physical abuse, and she cherished the time she got to spend with Feray. She also felt strongly about girls being allowed to go to school. She presented a poster on brightly colored construction paper she herself wrote, and drew on her biography, and she made sure to tell the class to “please notice, all the students in the drawing are girls.” She took pleasure in encouraging other women to continue their studies to get a basic education diploma as she did, and she argued that it does take a while to learn how read and write; after all, kids go to school for years.

Some Factors to Consider

Certain factors shape how social support is perceived and enacted in the literacy classrooms. I am not trying to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between these variables

and increased social support, but rather I am reporting some of the patterns that became salient after the data analysis.

Time. The FALP and ALAIP programs correspond to Level I MONE courses for basic literacy, and the two-decade old protocol between MONE and AÇEV allows the latter to design and implement programs that match MONE's Level I programs, which are 120 hours in length and have a curriculum that was updated using EU funds in 2008 (Gungor & Prins, 2010). To the approval of both Hilal Kuscül and Meltem Canturk, this curriculum is also sound-based (it starts with letter-sound pairs to raise phonological awareness rather than phrases and sentences) and is inspired by AÇEV's approach. AÇEV, however, practically doubled the program length for Level I (to 240 hours in about 7 months) for basic literacy by adding ALAIP as an option for participants who had completed the FALP. For example, many of the participants at the Smoky Valley had been in the program for the last seven months with Elif as their teacher, and the significantly increased time in the programs contributed to the relatively increased perceptions of social support and camaraderie among the participants at that site. Repeated and durable interaction is a requirement for the emergence of social support and feelings of solidarity (Small, 2009), and as such program length is an influential factor.

Built environment. The physical characteristics of the learning environment were largely determined by the strength and weaknesses of the host institutions and the communities in which they were situated. On the European side in the Riverside neighborhood, FALP was hosted by an adult education center managed by one of the city's wealthier and older municipalities, and it offered a beautiful space with ample opportunities for social interaction despite the hustle and bustle of the city right outside its gates. The adult education center was

also a hub for other municipal services, including other educational and health services as well as various forms of tangible aid.

Rainy Hill FALP was hosted by a *cemevi*, the place of worship for the Alevi minority in Turkey. As the volunteer teacher Tezay argued, the fact that *cemevis* are not recognized as places of worship by the Turkish state (hence, preventing them from the monetary support and legitimacy that mosques enjoy) leads them to delineate themselves as a socio-cultural and educational spaces to remain within the confines of the law. The complicated and evolving issue of *laiklik*, or the separation of the mosque and the state, is beyond the scope of this study. However, one unanticipated consequence of Alevis being denied the same privileges that Sunnis have, in terms of legitimacy and financial support of their places of worship by the state, is that they are more isolated from state influence; they design the built environment for their services with a strong focus on community building, and education. After all, the financial support for the center largely comes from the congregation. Furthermore, their rituals and traditions are congruent with men and women worshipping together, making it more acceptable for women to participate in activities including educational ones. To be clear, the program had non-Alevi students as well, and it met the standards for educational centers specified by MONE (which is a prerequisite for AÇEV to offer their program at a site).

Both Riverside and Rainy Hill had ample seating, a cafeteria, and generally pleasant and comfortable corners for the participating women to socialize before and after the classes, enjoying copious amounts of Turkish tea in tulip-shaped glasses. On the contrary, the programs on the Asian side had much more limited physical space for women to be able to socialize. As described in the previous chapter, the Smoky Valley site coped with this by starting to spend time in their homes hosting small gatherings regularly.

Conflicts and contestations. To expect that the literacy classroom is going to be completely free from human conflicts and contestations would be denying that all the actors in the adult literacy classroom as fully developed humans with as long a list of motivational orientations and rich emotional worlds as anyone. As places where people gather together, educational settings are spaces where conflict and disagreements can arise and where they are negotiated among parties with differing agency. Some educational programs, however, do a better job than others creating classroom environments friendly and safe enough to be conducive to social interaction and support, and the results of the study indicate that AÇEV programs are quite effective in this regard. The teachers wield sizeable power in arbitrating conflict; in all the classrooms I observed, they enjoyed praise and stated admiration from the participants, at least ostensibly. The field advisers balance their influence by letting the participants know that the power exercised by the teachers can be constrained by AÇEV through them. For instance, if the participants have a concern or problem about the program, they can contact the field adviser on the issue. The advisers visit classrooms on a regular basis, and at least some of the students know them by name. They provide the teacher with feedback on various issues including classroom management and conflict resolution.

Conflicts and disagreements were reported by the participants and the teachers; however, the observations and interviews indicate that the potential for and emergence of conflict is handled fairly successfully. As the analysis of the curricular materials has demonstrated, the curriculum is attentive to disagreements among women, and it includes reading passages and women's support sections (in FALP) on effective communication and conflict resolution. Furthermore, the AÇEV main office and the field advisers posited that they share and discuss various scenarios (based on prior experience) at length during the 13-day volunteer teacher

training to equip the participating volunteers with skills and strategies to manage expectations and disagreements that have the potential to disrupt class culture and atmosphere. Hence, classroom interactions and interpersonal relationships are not left to dynamics that would be shaped by pure chance. Instead, the programs try to mitigate problems in this area actively, which contributes to the perceptions of social support.

Chapter Summary

The first two results chapters provided evidence that the adult literacy approach has changed in time to become more oriented toward fostering social support, and the curricular materials explicitly, consistently, and repeatedly attempt the creation of a supportive environment for the women learners. The social connections were “sustained by the center, rather than merely in it” (Small, 2009, p. 105). This chapter reported perceptions of social support and examples of its enactment in the classroom.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

In this section, I will present my conclusions based on the analysis of the data I have presented in the last three chapters. AÇEV programs are sites where social support is perceived and enacted for participating women to varying degrees. I have argued that this is not an unanticipated gain (Small, 2009), based on the analysis the literacy curricula, which advocates for gender equality in Turkey and helps women deal with issues and problems inside and outside of the classroom. Even such a curriculum, however, does not guarantee uniform results, and the way that women connect with each other, their teachers, and other potentially supportive institutions is mediated by factors such as total program time, characteristics of the partnering institution offering the classroom space, and personal traits of the volunteer teachers.

AÇEV and Literacy

To explain the relationship between AÇEV's literacy program, its underlying approach to literacy, and social support perceived by the learners, it is necessary to understand AÇEV's very unique approach to adult literacy education. There is prior research establishing an association between the kind of classroom activities offered and in the ways participants are connected with each other. Since curricular materials and classroom activities are shaped by the way literacy is defined and operationalized at the organizational level, a holistic approach to studying AÇEV adult literacy programs and their role in providing social support to participating women would undoubtedly include an analysis of the theoretical suppositions about adult literacy underpinning their programs.

Before I went to Turkey to study the adult literacy programs offered by AÇEV, I was planning to use a theoretical framework that described relationships between different actors in the global educational landscape as scientific linkages (Jonkers & Tjissen, 2008) to explain how AÇEV adopted Functional Literacy as the guiding philosophy. Such a framework was congruent with my preliminary analysis of the research published by AÇEV, the educational and publication records of AÇEV founders, and AÇEV's continuing collaborations with academics in Western Europe and North America. This initial examination highlighted the role of scientific linkages between AÇEV and various actors in influencing what adult literacy meant at AÇEV. I hoped that tracing the origins of the theoretical approaches to literacy adopted by AÇEV and exploring any relationship these approaches may have with the scientific connections between Turkey, North America, and Western Europe would help me better understand and eventually describe AÇEV programs. However, through in-depth interviews with the members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department and field advisers, observations in the classes, and analyzing the curricular materials (and reading historical accounts of one of the founders, Sevda Bekman), it became obvious that I needed a more sophisticated theoretical framework to understand how AÇEV ended up with Functional Adult Literacy Program in the first place and how this program has evolved into one that aims to support and strengthen women, defying easy categorizations in its current iteration.

Growing frustrated not being able to find a theoretical framework with enough explanatory power fitting with the data I collected in the field, I came across Oppenheim and Stambach's (2014) work. They offered a useful tool to deal with how educational theory is transformed when it moves across time and space. In their view, presented through empirical research in Pakistan, educational actors and phenomena are "positioned within an endlessly

intricate lattice of influences and relationships that converge and metamorphose at distinct nexuses” (p. 378). They propose global norm making, which itself is reinterpreting a framework from international law, as a useful concept for understanding what goes on at these nexuses of engagement. Using the tools provided by them, I argue that AÇEV is a dynamic actor in this intricate lattice of relationships in adult literacy field, and it is an important nexus transforming educational theory and practice, at least in adult literacy. AÇEV has redefined and re-imagined what functional literacy means so as to respond to demands from Turkish literacy field and national and international partners including funders. Academics played a significant role, too, in legitimizing this new definition and pushing this novel transformed delineation of Functional Literacy back into the mesh of relationships through conference presentations and publications in refereed journals. Here reflexivity would require me to include myself as an actor as well, “included but not determining” (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014, p. 377) in the long list of persons and organizations having interacted with AÇEV as a Turkish-born doctoral researcher from North America.

As the name of their first adult literacy program suggests, the program developers situated it squarely in the functional literacy tradition. Hilal Kuscul argued it was a much needed perspective change over one adopted by the state at the time that categorized adults into a binary, literate and illiterate. The program has been modified several times since the initial launch, and I would argue that it is very hard to recognize it as a functional literacy program even though it still retains the name. However, I did not analyze the curricular materials for the first iteration of the program, and as a result I cannot gauge if the name has ever appropriately described the program. It is, however, telling that the name of the department responsible from the programs was changed from Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) Department to Literacy and

Women's Support Department in early 2000s when AÇEV as an NGO became more aware of gender issues. AÇEV staff mentioned the EU-funded "gender study" (2005-2008) as one of the catalysts of this change in perspective in terms of putting supporting women as a priority in all AÇEV programs including adult literacy. The study led AÇEV staff to work with other NGOs that are more active in women's issues in Turkey such as Kadın Adayları Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği (KA-DER), an NGO that aims to help women run for office at various levels of the government of the country. Many of the lessons learned during the study informed the later iterations of the curriculum, especially for FALP. AÇEV collaborated with other NGOs and organizations that advocate for women's rights to get the units addressing various women's issues "right" from family planning to women's rights in terms of the sharing of the family inheritance.

Based on the communications I had with Meltem Canturk from the Literacy and Women's Support Department, there are plans to change the name of the program yet again. As she told me via e-mail, this is a change in vision and strategy, and it will most likely be reflected in the curriculum eventually, as well most likely changing its name. However, AÇEV program redesigns take much time and effort since each major revision is carried out based on feedback from the field, and it is field-tested in terms of various criteria including learning outcomes and responses from the learners to the new materials before being implemented across the country.

The data I collected in AÇEV's main offices lead me to believe that AÇEV is on the brink of some major changes in their literacy program beyond the adoption of a new literacy framework. Based on the numbers from the Turkish Statistics Institute (TSI; the official agency that shapes and informs government policy), the number of adults that are defined as print-illiterate have been dropping significantly. AÇEV staff from the Literacy and Women's Support

Department are not convinced that the changes in statistics are congruent with what they observe in the field. Regardless, they admit that these changes influence the willingness of government actors to cooperate with them. Furthermore, as an NGO that depends on various state and non-state actors in addition to their private funding, they are aware that their existence is inextricably tied to staying relevant in the new discourses of adult education in Turkey and around the world. The case of AÇEV and how their approach to functional literacy has been transformed over the years illustrate how the “educational ideas, values, practices, and norms that we study move and transform across space and time through networks of knowledge and influence in which our work is included but not determining” (Oppenheim & Stambach, 2014, p. 377).

This transformation is one that I will be closely observing in coming years, since I argue that AÇEV is a significant nexus in the adult literacy field in Europe (through their programs targeting Turkish immigrants) and the Middle East. There is, however, one very relevant and immediate consequence of the way AÇEV’s FALP curriculum has transformed over the years: The increased emphasis on women’s issues in the curriculum creates an atmosphere where the participants feel very comfortable bringing up their personal lives. The lesson plans explicitly encourage the women to discuss their personal concerns and problems over a variety of issues affecting their day-to-day lives. The data indicate that this, in turn, led some of the participants to perceive social support from their peers and teachers. I will explore this connection further after highlighting some of the recent changes in adults’ literacy practices in Istanbul.

Changing Literacy Practices

To contend that AÇEV’s literacy program has changed significantly over the years is only telling half of the story, as observation and interview data indicate that literacy events and practices have been altered as well, notably to include mobile devices capable of running various

applications and connecting to the Internet. Although I have not analyzed AÇEV's basic computer literacy program or the web-based literacy program, the use of the internet as the distribution method for a basic literacy course is much less implausible based on observing and talking to young women who argue that they are not print-literate all the while using the latest applications on their smart-phones and tablet computers at AÇEV's FALP and ALAIP sites. This indicates far-reaching changes in adults' print and digital literacy practices in Turkey, and specifically Istanbul. As explained by the AÇEV Literacy and Women's Support Department staff, gone are the days when they would include worksheets and diagrams to help participating women use electric washing machines.

Hilal Kuscul observed that unless women are physically prevented from using a certain technology, it will somehow be integrated into their literacy practices. When I asked the young women how they learned to use their smart phones with applications requiring print-literacy, they often looked at me as if I was asking a question with a very obvious answer. They just kept at it until they figured out how to perform a certain task. In the field, every young woman I talked to (usually in their 20s and 30s) had a smart phone and/or a tablet. The ones who did not have one yet expressed a desire to acquire one as soon as they could afford it. This was brought up as a mystery by one of the volunteer teachers who maintained that she did not understand why the women would prioritize a smart phone over more pressing needs. However the women I talked to offered examples of how these devices helped them communicate with friends and family, and the devices offer relatively cheap entertainment through free games.

According to AÇEV staff and the teachers, even historically most-cited uses of print literacy among participating women such as better navigating public spaces, especially hospitals, has been affected by changing technological tools. Turkey has a single-payer health insurance

run by the state, and many of the participants use this health care system which has recently started to allow people to make appointments online.

For their part, AÇEV is trying to adjust to these changing trends in the Turkish society by creating new literacy programs to help women use computers and the Internet, and to utilize these tools to let them access literacy programs. However, many young women mentioned that even though they did want to be able to use computers and access AÇEV's literacy programs online, they simply did not have a computer with an internet connection. A few of the women complained that there was a computer at their home, but their children were not supportive of letting them use these devices. Therefore, even though women's literacy practices have changed to include Information and Communication Technologies, existing asymmetrical relations of power and wealth make it very challenging for them to use these tools effectively to advance themselves in their education or stay connected with friends and family.

Literacy Curriculum and Social Support

The study of the transformation of the FALP and ALAIP curriculums at AÇEV is very useful for better understanding how educational ideas move across borders. For the purposes of this study, these changes are also very relevant to social support and how it is enacted and perceived in the adult literacy classroom. AÇEV's unique approach to adult literacy turned the Functional Literacy Program (FALP), the first of the four literacy programs at AÇEV and one of the programs I observed while in Istanbul, into a program where supporting women is the primary objective. I could not trace this change in their published work, since this aspect of the programs have not been studied before and their published research focuses more on cognitive gains and learning outcomes in terms of print literacy. As a result it was surprising to learn that the name of the department responsible of adult literacy programs at AÇEV has *kadın destek*

(women's support) in it. It was even more unpredicted to analyze the FALP curriculum and observe that the whole curriculum was woven around women's issues with a very explicit desired outcome of fostering gender equality and helping women deal with a wide variety of issues from reproductive health to recognizing and dealing with different kinds of domestic violence. Every one of the 25 units in the FALP curriculum contains themes concerning women and children's rights.

Furthermore, based on my analysis of the books used in the two programs and observations in the classrooms, the FALP curriculum, in particular, is designed to foster social connections between the participants and the volunteer teachers and among the students themselves. The themes in the reading passages aim to increase awareness to women's issues in Turkey, and the activities in the classroom such as the diary writing create a venue for women to bring the personal problems and concerns up in the classroom. Each unit has *sohbet* (conversation) sections where the teachers are asked to encourage the women to talk reacting to the reading passages and the information the teacher has provided in the unit. Furthermore, the teachers' manual has a list of organizations that the women can contact in situations brought up by the curriculum, such as domestic violence. There is also regularly updated information about state-run programs helping people and families in need. Much of this can be categorized as informational support that is nurturant rather than action-facilitating; however, there are sections where the women are offered step-by-step advice on how to proceed in case of domestic violence including physical and sexual violence against children, which is certainly action-facilitating. Units are designed to raise consciousness over various issues that these women may have to deal with and then offer them advice and list of resources in dealing with these.

AÇEV volunteers walk a very thin line here as it may be dangerous for them and the women in their classes if the teachers and the literacy program are perceived as meddling with private family issues. Professional AÇEV staff who have been working for the foundation almost from the beginning argued that they have been taking a much more active role in supporting women on non-academic issues recently. In fact, the curriculum is so progressive in women's rights issues (in the Turkish context, of course) that I felt the need to ask AÇEV main staff if they were worried about push-back from seats of political power including the partnering ministries in the government. Their response was that they were making sure that all their arguments were backed by scientific research, and they were in effect using the research-informed nature of their curricula to argue that they did not have a political agenda. The field advisers and the AÇEV staff from the main offices also talked about a sea change in Turkish public opinion that made it easier for AÇEV to advocate for gender issues and include formerly taboo issues around women's life and their role in the family.

AÇEV offers a variety of programs, and adult literacy is only one of the divisions in the foundation. As Hilal Kuscul explained, AÇEV's other projects have fed the literacy program, altering it into one that focuses more on supporting women. Principal among them is the EU-funded "gender study." However, there were national partners who financially supported research that found its way in the curriculum as well, for example, Sabancı Foundation's grant to study how disabled women can have better access to educational programs. In fact, one of the FALP units is on rights of the disabled people in Turkey, and it asks the women to critically examine how their built environments might be hindering the mobility of people with disabilities.

Perceived and Enacted Social Support in AÇEV Programs

I have observed and heard from the teachers and participating women instances of enacted social support inside and outside the classrooms where the participants offered emotional and informational support to each other. Material and tangible support was rare among participants (even though I have observed participants treat them to cups of Turkish tea at locations where there was a café on the premises) and mostly flowed from AÇEV to the participants in the form of free educational materials: literacy primers, notebooks, pens, and pencils. Teachers also offered material support to their students in various forms, from eye glasses to a student with vision issues to books from a reading library the teacher formed using her own funds. Teachers were advised caution by the field advisers against creating a relationship where the participants are dependent on them for goods and services, but they were not discouraged from helping the students (if the teacher still wants to offer help after a discussion of the issue with the field adviser).

All but one of the students described classrooms as cooperative and supportive spaces where they felt safe and comfortable. I observed participants and teachers navigate some sensitive political issues in the charged political climate of the country, especially since the Gezi protests. The political tension was so high in the larger society that on May Day 2014, I was not able to leave my hotel room in Taksim region of the city due to police cordoning off all the main streets. There were also large demonstrations when 301 miners lost their lives in Soma, and events on both of these days were discussed in a couple of the classrooms where participants tried to make sense of the political tensions and the tragedy in Soma together. I also observed some of the participants felt comfortable sharing personal stories about various forms of discrimination in the classes. One notable example was a Kurdish woman describing the ways

the school where her children were attending made them feel unwelcome, and other women with various ethnic identities empathized with her and validated her family's experience. In the classes where the FALP curriculum was in use rather than ALAIP, there certainly was more interaction among the participants, and they reported more instances of interaction with the people in the classrooms.

Students usually did not spend time outside of the classes together. However, even in classes where they reported no regular outside interaction, the women visited a sick classmate to offer get well soon wishes, and in one classroom almost the entire classroom visited a friend at their home to offer her condolences after she lost a loved one. In settings where the built environment allowed (two of the four programs visited), women spent time together sipping Turkish tea and smoking before and after the classes. Often the teacher joined them as well, and these were times when issues more personal in nature seemed to be discussed. However, even in a program site where there were not any physical accommodations for socialization, students and the teacher found ways to spend time together outside of the classroom visiting each other at their homes and sharing food. This was the case in only one of the four sites I visited, and as I will argue below, it was a result of classroom activity encouraging sharing of personal issues, diary writing, and the length of the time that the participants and the teacher got to spend together, which was about seven months.

Three of the four programs did outside activities such as visiting museums and public parks together, and participants reported really enjoying the time they got to spend together. The only setting where these kinds of field trips were not available was in the classroom with a male teacher, and he reported that he was not always sure what would be deemed appropriate in terms of spending time with the participants outside the classroom. All the teachers reported that

usually the participants stay behind after all the participants have left the classroom when they have personal issues or a question on non-academic issues, such as advice on their children's education. The teachers knew intimate details of students' lives from classroom discussions, from conversations with participants after classes and during breaks. Field advisers noted that in the past, many classes would not want to have the 15-20 minute break after the first hour and a half to cover more ground, but in recent years they have been encouraging the teachers to offer the break to let students rest a little and be able to better concentrate in the latter half of the class. One consequence of this change, of course, is that participants get to socialize more especially in two settings where there was ample comfortable seating available outside of the classroom.

One crucial way the programs include and help women with children is that they allow children inside the classroom if there is no child-care facility available at the host institutions. Only one out of four had child-care on premises, and it was only part-time and did not always coincide with classroom hours. As a result, I saw a 6-year-old sit with her mother during the first half of the three-hour lesson, and the others mothers were friendly with the child. AÇEV staff maintained that at least a few children in the classrooms were more common in courses offered at schools since they tend to attract young mothers. I only saw one instance of this, but the volunteer teachers are encouraged to accommodate women with children as much as possible.

Lastly, AÇEV also helps their participants connect with other governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations based on their needs. They have an established system where the teachers are able to get guidance from the field advisers on issues and problems that they do not know how to approach, who in return reach out to the AÇEV main offices. AÇEV staff and field advisers gave examples of cases where the main offices provided information for pro-bono legal help for a few of the participants, even though this is not

necessarily a service they advertise to all participating women. There is also a list of organizations after each unit in the teachers' handbook that offers resources on the issues raised such as domestic violence. AÇEV main offices are aware that these institutions, such as police stations, are not always very good at handling women's issues in an appropriate way, but they also encourage the participants to ask these organizations for better and more responsive services through civic participation.

Since field advisers work in the same region year after year, they maintain that they are knowledgeable about resources in the community. There are also multiple lists of potentially helpful organizations in supporting the women in the programs in the main offices. According to Meltem Cantürk, there is not one single consolidated list. Instead, the AÇEV main office staff have a sense of how to go about finding other collaborating institutions that may be useful in helping a certain student. Hilal Kuşçul, veteran literacy program coordinator and one of the current assistants to the general manager of the NGO, agreed with Cantürk and added that sometimes another department at AÇEV has the most useful contacts. For example, the Father Support Program compiled the most updated list of partnering organizations, and thus when the adult literacy division needs information regarding where to direct a field adviser, volunteer teacher, or participant, they have access to the most recent list of institutions.

I have observed and learned through in-depth interviews that AÇEV programs offer informational, emotional, and instrumental support to the participating women. The women do perceive a friendly, comfortable environment, but they do not report receiving instrumental support or spending much time outside of the classes with their classmates other than one program site. This is congruent with the fact that many of these women deal with sustained poverty and discrimination due to their gender, and as such cannot offer much to other

participants. However, they do receive emotional and informational support from each other, and all three different kinds from the volunteer teachers.

There are certain factors that seem to play a role in the way social support is perceived and enacted in the literacy classrooms. In this last part, I will try to explain some of these factors with the understanding that I am not trying to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between these variables and increased social support. Rather, I am reporting some of the patterns that became salient after the data analysis.

Time. All four of the classrooms I observed met for three hours a day, three times a week for about 3.5 months. Depending on the availability of the teacher, agreement among the participants, and what the teachers perceived the needs of their students to be, they sometimes met four times a week. Both FALP and ALAIP are 120 hours in length, and all the teachers reported that the time was not enough to complete the curriculum; often they started earlier than planned and continued weeks after the official end date with willing students as long as classroom space was available. The time limits on programs are tied to the legal framework resulting from AÇEV's protocol with Ministry of National Education (MONE). The Level I adult literacy courses, which approximately match the FALP curriculum offered by MONE, are supposed to be 120 hours by national legal guidelines. There is no corresponding program to ALAIP offered by MONE, and it uses an opening in the legislation describing complementary lessons to Level I literacy courses as its *raison d'être*.

The fact that FALP and ALAIP are usually offered by the same teachers and at the same hosting institutions make it possible for the two programs to be offered one after the other to the same community. As a result, some participants experience the two programs effectively as one program spanning about seven months. Since the participants who continue with ALAIP upon

completing FALP are presumably those who enjoy being with the classmates and the teacher, it is more likely that the participants will start getting to know each other much better. This is congruent with my observations and interview data at Smoky Valley where Elif has been teaching at the same location the better part of last year together with many of the initial participants. The time spent combined with innovative ways the teachers and the students have been spending time outside of the classroom has made this site the one with most social support perceived and observed. Even though there is not sufficient data to argue that time is a determining factor for perceived social support, maybe not so unsurprisingly, it does seem to play a definite role.

Host Institutions. Since AÇEV does not use their own class space for the programs they offer, the physical facilities and the organizational connections of the host institutions seem to change the amount and nature of social support available to students. I visited four different host institutions on the four different AÇEV site: a spiritual center for the Alevi community, a People's Education Center co-sharing a building with the local directorate of the Ministry of National Education (this was the building with the most number of people wearing ties and dark suits), and two adult education centers partially supported by the local municipality. On each of these sites, People's Education Centers (the state-sponsored adult education centers in Turkey) have offered various other courses, and as such set the minimum standards for the classroom space. AÇEV only uses spaces that have been approved by the Ministry of National Education via specific guidelines set by People's Education Centers due to the protocol they have signed with the Ministry of Education and their desire to be perceived as a neutral actor in adult education field that is driven by educational research and not political ideologies. For example, the local People's Education Center mandated that the Alevi *cemevi* (house of worship) opens up

a new entrance door to the large building so that the learning space was clearly designated as distinct from the praying areas, and each classroom has a framed photo of *Atatürk*, *Gençliğe Hitabe* and *İstiklal Marşı*.

Despite these minimum standards, there were many differences in what each host institution is able to offer to the participants in terms of social support. One of the two municipally supported institutions, for example, has been in the community for decades and offered financial help in the form of free goods and services to the people living in the community. The services are means-tested, yet they are available to anyone residing in that part of the city. Participants to AÇEV's literacy programs, in turn, become aware of these services and make use of them, which I observed at least one of the participating women do. It also works the other way around when people who have attended another course offered at the center or used one of the means-tested services learn about AÇEV programs available at the site and decide to take part in them. Furthermore, this institution had the most conducive setting for the participants to mingle before and after the classes with lots of open space, seating, and reasonably priced cups of tea—the universal social lubricant in Turkey—available. Comparing this setting to the People's Education Center who asked the literacy program to vacate the premises a month early since they needed the classroom space for an exhibition really highlights how the host organization can make or break AÇEV programs beyond their influence on social support.

There are other factors influencing the social support perceived and enacted that became noticeable through the data analysis, such as the personality characteristics of the volunteer teachers in setting the class atmosphere, their demographic characteristics, and their eagerness to give out their personal phone numbers while encouraging other women to do so as well.

However, it is harder to delineate these as distinct and influential variables compared to time, or the characteristics of the host institution.

The data collected for this research clearly indicates that AÇEV programs are sites where social support is perceived and enacted for participating women to varying degrees. It is hard to call this as an unanticipated gain, having studied and analyzed the FALP curriculum, the main purpose of which is to advocate for gender equality in Turkey and help women deal with issues and problems inside and outside of the classroom. Even such a curriculum, however, does not guarantee uniform results, and the way that women connect with each other, their teachers, and other potentially supportive institutions is mediated by factors such as total program time, characteristics of the partnering institution offering the classroom space, and personal traits of the volunteer teachers. Further research is needed to better delineate the relationships between these factors.

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Appendix A: Names Mentioned in this Dissertation

Aydin Durgunoglu	Current primary academic adviser for adult literacy programs at AÇEV.
Ayşe Ozyegin	Along with her husband, the primary private funder of AÇEV. One of the founders of AÇEV.
Banu Oney	One of the two academics who designed the first iterations of adult literacy programs at AÇEV.
Cigdem Kagitcibasi	One of the three academic founders of AÇEV. A professor in social psychology in Turkey.
Diane Sunar	One of the three founders of AÇEV. A professor in social psychology in Turkey.
Filiz Ismen	One of the two field advisers on the Asian side of Istanbul.
Gul Serin	One of the two field advisers on the Asian side of Istanbul.
Gulten Cantimur	One of the two field advisers on the European side of Istanbul.
Hilal Gencay	One of the members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department in Mecidiyekoy.
Hilal Kuscul	One of the two assistants to the general manager. A veteran of the Literacy and Women's Support Department
Husnu Ozyegin	Along with his wife, the primary private funder of AÇEV.
Meltem Canturk	Director of Literacy and Women's Support Department in Mecidiyekoy.
Mutlu Yasa	One of the members of the Literacy and Women's Support Department in Mecidiyekoy.
Nalan Yalcin	Current general manager of AÇEV.
Sevda Bekman	One of the three founders of AÇEV. A professor in early childhood education in Turkey.
Suna Aslan	One of the two field advisers on the European side of Istanbul.

Appendix B: List of Acronyms

AÇEV	Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı (Mother Child Education Foundation)
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ALAIIP	Advanced Literacy and Access to Information Program
FALP	Functional Adult Literacy Program
IMF	International Money Fund
KA-DER	Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği (Association for Support of Women Candidates)
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LOC	Library of Congress
MONE	Ministry of National Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
MSPSS	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
NLS	New Literacy Studies
PEC	People's Education Center
TSI	Turkish Statistical Institute

Appendix C: Survey Instrument (Turkish)

Çok Boyutlu Algılanan Sosyal Destek Ölçeği'nin Gözden Geçirilmiş Formu

Aşağıda 12 cümle ve her bir cümle altında da cevaplarınızı işaretlemeniz için 1'den 7'ye kadar rakamlar verilmiştir. Her cümlede söylenenin sizin için ne kadar çok doğru olduğunu veya olmadığını belirtmek için o cümle altındaki rakamlardan yalnız bir tanesini daire içine alarak işaretleyiniz. Bu şekilde 12 cümlelerin her birine bir işaret koyarak cevaplarınızı veriniz. Lütfen hiçbir cümleyi cevapsız bırakmayınız. Sizce doğruya en yakın olan rakamı işaretleyiniz.

1. Ailem ve arkadaşlarım dışında olan ve ihtiyacım olduğunda yanımda olan bir insan (örneğin, flört, nişanlı, sözlü, akraba, komşu, doktor) var.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

2. Ailem ve arkadaşlarım dışında olan ve sevinç ve kederlerimi paylaşabileceğim bir insan (örneğin, flört, nişanlı, sözlü, akraba, komşu, doktor) var.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

3. Ailem (örneğin, annem, babam, eşim, çocuklarım, kardeşlerim) bana gerçekten yardımcı olmaya çalışır.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

4. İhtiyacım olan duygusal yardımı ve desteği ailemden (örneğin, annemden, babamdan, eşimden, çocuklarımdan, kardeşlerimden) alırım.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

5. Ailem ve arkadaşlarım dışında olan ve beni gerçekten rahatlatan bir insan (örneğin, flört, nişanlı, sözlü, akraba, komşu, doktor) var.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

6. Arkadaşlarım bana gerçekten yardımcı olmaya çalışırlar.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

7. İşler kötü gittiğinde arkadaşlarıma güvenebilirim.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

8. Sorunlarımı ailemle (örneğin, annemle, babamla, eşimle, çocuklarımla, kardeşlerimle) konuşabilirim.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

9. Sevinç ve kederlerimi paylaşabileceğim arkadaşlarım var.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

10. Ailem ve arkadaşlarım dışında olan ve duygularıma önem veren bir insan (örneğin, flört, nişanlı, sözlü, akraba, komşu, doktor) var.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

11. Kararlarımı vermede ailem (örneğin, annem, babam, eşim, çocuklarım, kardeşlerim) bana yardımcı olmaya isteklidir.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

12. Sorunlarımı arkadaşlarımla konuşabilirim.

Kesinlikle hayır 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 kesinlikle evet.

Appendix D: Survey Instrument (English)

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988)

Instructions: We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

Circle the "1" if you Very Strongly Disagree

Circle the "2" if you Strongly Disagree

Circle the "3" if you Mildly Disagree

Circle the "4" if you are Neutral

Circle the "5" if you Mildly Agree

Circle the "6" if you Strongly Agree

Circle the "7" if you Very Strongly Agree

1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO

2. There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO

3. My family really tries to help me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fam

4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fam

5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO

6. My friends really try to help me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fri

7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fri

8. I can talk about my problems with my family.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fam

9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fri

10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 SO

Appendix E: Sample Data Analysis (Turkish)

Meaning Unit	Condensed meaning unit Description close to the text	Condensed meaning unit Interpretation of underlying meaning	Subtheme	Theme
Komşularımızla zaten tanışıyorlardık ama bu kadar değil burada daha şey olduk kardeş gibi olduk, bir derdimiz, sorunumuz olsa daha rahat konuşur olduk. Remziye, Rainy Hill	Burada kardeş gibi olduk, bir derdimiz, sorunumuz olsa daha rahat konuşur olduk.	Bir sorun olsa bunu paylaşıp konuşacak biri.	Bir sorunla baş ederken duygusal destek	Duygusal destek
Mesela işte, ders bitti ya, herkes gidiyor, bir bakıyorsun o kalmış, konu açılıyor hele de kafanda bir şey varsa, kendini içinde buluyorsun, o da sağolsun dinliyor yani. Ceyda, Smoky Valley	Kafanda bir şey varsa, kendini içinde buluyorsun, o da sağolsun dinliyor yani.	Zihnini meşgul eden sorunları dinleyecek biri.	Bir sorunla baş ederken duygusal destek	Duygusal destek
Hani öyle oluyor Allah göstermesin kötü bir şey olmasın ama biri rahatsız olsa bir şey olsa biz ona gideriz. Selin, Rainy Hill	Biri rahatsız olsa bir şey olsa biz ona gideriz.	Bir kriz durumunda fiziksel olarak yanında olacak biri.	Bir sorunla baş ederken duygusal destek	Duygusal destek

Appendix F: Sample Data Analysis (English)

Meaning Unit	Condensed meaning unit Description close to the text	Condensed meaning unit Interpretation of underlying meaning	Subtheme	Theme
We already knew our neighbors but we were not this close, here we have become like sisters, we have started to talk about it more comfortably when we have a problem. (Remziye, Rainy Hill)	We have become like sisters, we have started to talk about it more comfortably when we have a problem.	Someone to share a problem and talk about it in case of a problem	Emotional support while dealing with a problem	Emotional support
For example, the lesson is over, everyone has left, she [the teacher] is the only one left, and somehow it comes up especially if you have something on your mind, you find yourself in it, and thankfully she listens to you. (Ceyda, Smoky Valley)	If you have something on your mind, you find yourself in it, and thankfully she listens to you.	Someone to listen to you when there is something on your mind	Emotional support while dealing with a problem	Emotional support
God forbid something bad happens, but if someone gets sick or something like that happens, we would go visit her. (Selin, Rainy Hill)	If someone gets sick or something like that happens, we would go visit her.	Someone to be in close physical proximity in a time of crisis	Emotional support while dealing with a problem	Emotional support

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